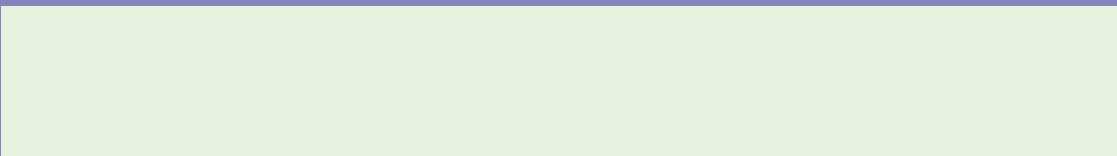
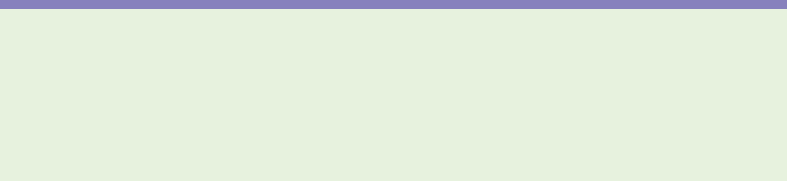
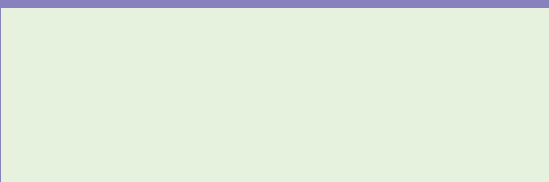
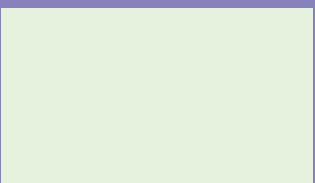


Women and Violence:

what's law
got to do with it?



30th
Anniversary
Conference



Rights of Women is an Industrial and Provident society (not-for-profit), which was founded in 1975 to promote the interests of women in relation to the law. Rights of Women is a membership organisation that works to attain justice and equality by informing, educating and empowering women on their legal rights. The organisation runs two confidential legal advice lines for women, one providing advice in areas such as family law, relationship breakdown and domestic violence, and one focusing on sexual violence and law. We produce publications and information sheets, organise conferences and training courses and undertake policy and research work in areas of law affecting women.

The organisation is funded by the Association of London Government and the Big Lottery Fund.



Disclaimer: This publication is a report of proceedings at the conference "Women and Violence: what's law got to do with it?" convened by Rights of Women on the 3rd November 2005, held at Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD. This report is not intended to be a verbatim record. In addition, many of the footnotes to the presentations featured in this publication have been added by Rights of Women.

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Contents

Director's Preface	2
Morning Session – Violence against Women: Rhetoric or Remedy	
Introduction by the Chair	3
Keynote Address: Baroness Scotland	3
Marai Larasi	8
Yvonne Rhoden	10
Question and Answer Session	13
Workshop Reports	18
Afternoon Session – Violence against Women: Is there Refuge Within the Law?	
Alison Stanley	25
Poonam Joshi	28
Question and Answer Session	32
Rights of Women 30th Anniversary Keynote Address: Doreen Lawrence	33
Ranjit Kaur	36
Annexes:	
Annex I: Biographies of Speakers and Workshop Facilitators	39
Annex II: Conference Agenda	42
Annex III: List of Conference Delegates	43

Director's Preface



Our Conference marks a major milestone in our development at Rights of Women. From humble beginnings, we have evolved into a vibrant women's organization providing thousands of women with much needed legal advice and valuable support. To be a women's organization rooted in feminist values remains a challenge in 2006 as much as it did in 1975 when we were formed. Some may feel that it is a bigger challenge now than it was then. Rights of Women continues to exist because full equality for women has not been achieved. However, we take great pride in our roots and the contribution that we have made to the cause of equality and justice for women during our 30 years of existence.

Eradicating violence against women is still the greatest challenge for us all. For every woman who dies as a consequence of violence is an indication of our failure to collectively address this social anathema. The law has an important role to play in securing equality for women. However, the law alone cannot provide all the answers and so we must also look to social attitudes and behaviour to change too. I hope that this conference report will serve as a useful resource in identifying areas for improvement and change as well as recognizing those good initiatives that are being undertaken by the statutory and voluntary sectors.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody at Rights of Women for their hard work and commitment to making this Conference such a successful event. My particular thanks go to our Training Officer, Kathy Francis, who worked so hard and tirelessly to ensure that everything went smoothly on the day and to Sanchita Hosali, our Policy Officer for putting together this comprehensive report.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to everybody who has contributed to our work over the last 30 years. We could not have reached this important milestone without your contribution, support and good wishes.

Thank you.

Ranjit Kaur, Director, Rights of Women

Morning Session – Violence against Women: Rhetoric or Remedy

Chair Carol Valentine¹

Carol began by noting that the conference, titled “Women and Violence: what’s law got to do with it?”, marked the thirtieth anniversary of Rights of Women. She spoke about the origins of the organisation, borne out of the women’s liberation movement and women’s demands for access to free legal advice and justice.

She noted that many changes have taken place since the organisation’s establishment in 1975, the same year that both the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act 1970 came into effect. However, Carol noted that violence against women continues and is an affront to society – she questioned how many more women and children must suffer before it is accepted that the law in itself cannot provide full protection. This is a challenge that all the conference delegates have to face, and many will recognise the need for non-legal changes including social, political and economic measures. Carol Valentine set out the four key conference aims:

- i. To examine the impact of violence against women, especially on Black and Minority Ethnic women.
- ii. To examine the laws response to violence against women.
- iii. To evaluate the current law and identify areas in need of change.
- iv. To develop strategies of response.

Carol then introduced the Home Office Minister Baroness Scotland, the morning session’s keynote speaker.

Keynote Address: Baroness Scotland²



Baroness Scotland providing the morning session keynote address.

Baroness Scotland thanked Ranjit Kaur, Director of Rights of Women, for inviting her to speak at the conference, and further congratulated Rights of Women on reaching its thirtieth anniversary and for its commitment to informing, educating and empowering women about their legal rights.

Baroness Scotland’s presentation focused on Government initiatives to tackle domestic violence. Before turning to discuss these she noted the shocking statistics around domestic violence. Globally domestic violence is the leading cause of morbidity for women aged between nineteen and 44 years; greater than war, cancer, and motor

(1) Chair of Rights of Women Management Committee.

(2) The Right Honourable Baroness Scotland of Asthal, QC, is a Home Office Minister of State for the Criminal Justice System and Offender Management.

vehicle accidents. In the UK domestic violence accounts for seventeen percent of violent crime and for 30% of those victims abuse starts or escalates during pregnancy. Every year approximately 120 women are murdered by a current or former partner – this is more than two women every week. Baroness Scotland also highlighted the effect of domestic violence on children, noting those living in abusive households are three to five times more likely to be injured or abused, either directly or whilst trying to protect their abused parent. She acknowledged the profoundly negative impact of witnessing domestic violence on children’s emotional and physical wellbeing, and their educational attainment and social interaction. However, she said it is also important to understand the deep and corrosive effect domestic violence can have on women, noting that almost 50% of women in prison have experienced violence in at least one relationship. These, Baroness Scotland remarked, are stark reminders of the need for early intervention and prevention.

Baroness Scotland moved on to discuss the Domestic Violence, Crime and Disorder Act 2004 (hereafter DV Act 2004), described as the biggest overhaul of domestic violence legislation in thirty years. Provisions of the Act included making breach of a civil non-molestation order a criminal offence; allowing courts to impose restraining orders where appropriate, following conviction or acquittal for any offence; and making provision for domestic homicide reviews. Baroness Scotland said that measures within the Act have been rolling out since March 2005, and the remaining provisions will be implemented during 2006. As a barrister, Baroness Scotland highlighted her respect for the law which acts as a moral barometer shaping societal views on domestic violence. She said the DV Act signals what will be tolerated and what will not.

Baroness Scotland then spoke about the Domestic Violence National Plan (March 2005)³ noting the five key goals the Government has set itself as benchmarks to measure success. These are to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence; to increase the rate of reporting; to increase the rate of domestic violence offenders brought to justice; to develop a nationally consistent approach to the support required by women; and to reduce the number of domestic violence incidents.

She outlined some of the central themes in the Plan, including the need for education (schools, public services and communities) and the role of employers. She said education encourages us all to examine our relationships with one another and to ask searching questions about whether individually and as a community we are doing enough to challenge the culture which allows such a pernicious crime to go undetected and unpunished. She also noted that younger generations must learn that conflict is resolved by respect, common understanding and negotiation, not through dominance, control and abuse of power. With regard to employers, Baroness Scotland talked about the recently launched Corporate Alliance against Domestic Violence,⁴ an alliance of large businesses and organisations formed to take cohesive action against domestic violence. She also mentioned that the NHS, the largest employer in the UK, will be launching an information campaign using a downloadable campaign pack.⁵

(3) The Domestic Violence National Plan is available online from: <http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/domesticviolence51.pdf>

(4) See further <http://www.corporateallianceuk.com/index1.htm>

(5) For further information please see: www.nhsememployers.org/EmploymentPractice/our_key_messages.asp

Next, Baroness Scotland spoke about the specialist domestic violence court programme.⁶ In October 2005, following pilot schemes in Caerphilly and Croydon, the Government announced the development of 25 specialist domestic violence courts with one in at least every region in the England and Wales by April 2006. The Baroness said that the Government wants to ensure that the courts (criminal and civil) recognise the special concerns faced by the victims of domestic violence, and wants to develop court systems which place victims at its heart. She then highlighted some of the key positive outcomes from the pilot courts such as increased reporting of domestic violence incidents; a reduction in the number of cases withdrawn before trial; an increase in the number of perpetrators brought to justice; the imposition of more appropriate sentencing; and strengthened cases which can proceed even where a victim withdraws their complaint. In addition, the specialist courts have provided advice and support to domestic violence victims and enabled them to access a whole range of services, resulting in a positive effect on their feelings of safety and confidence in the justice system.

In Caerphilly, during the pilot period, guilty pleas went up from 21% to 27%, and by September 2005 (after the pilot period) they had averaged at 61%. The convictions similarly went up from 8% to 19% and have now reached 32%. This, the Baroness noted, meant that 93% of perpetrators were convicted. The statistics for victim withdrawals, which have historically been a problem, went down from 53% to 27% during the pilot and have since decreased further to 17%. Thus Baroness Scotland highlighted that the majority of women – 83% - now see the process through, which coupled with the higher conviction rate, is very encouraging. She also reiterated the Government's recent announcement of an additional one million pounds for the 2006/7 expansion.

Baroness Scotland concluded by stressing that domestic violence crosses all social barriers. However, she said the Government recognises that domestic violence has different consequences for victims from different communities. Referring to the examples of illegal activities such as forced marriage, so-called honour crimes, and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), the Baroness recognised that extended family members may condone or even share in the pattern of violence, which is a human rights abuse and in some cases also a form of child abuse and/or sexual abuse. She encouraged all conference delegates to respond to the Government consultation on whether to criminalise forced marriage.⁷

The Baroness said that silence amounts to collusion, noting everyone has a responsibility to tackle domestic violence in their public and personal lives. Noting the key role the voluntary sector plays in local service delivery, Baroness Scotland extended her thanks to the agencies and organisations present at the conference, including Rights of Women, for their important contributions to the work already conducted, and highlighted the importance of partnership working. She finished by referring to a woman who works on domestic violence who often cites Gandhi's saying that we have to be the change that we want to see in the world; we must individually and collectively commit to making

(6) For further information please see *Specialist Domestic Violence Court Programme: Guidance* produced by Her Majesty's Courts Service, Crown Prosecution Service & the Home Office, October 2005, available to download at: www.crimereduction.gov.uk/domesticviolence55.htm#w46

(7) Please note this consultation closed on the 5th December 2005, the Government intends to publish its response to the consultation in March 2006.

change happen. Baroness Scotland thanked the conference delegates for being part of the force that will make this happen.

The Chair thanked Baroness Scotland for her presentation, noting that whilst there is still much to do, there have been positive changes.

Question and Answer Session

Dr. Aisha Gill, Imkaan⁸ and NAWP,⁹ noted that there are approximately 500-600 women a year affected by the no recourse to public funds rule.¹⁰ Given that the theme of the DV Act alludes to support, protection, safety and justice, she asked Baroness Scotland to offer some explanation as to why this group seems to be denied access to justice.



Conference delegate during the question and answer session.

Baroness Scotland highlighted many of the changes that have been instituted over the last year to assist this group of women, including making the process faster, reducing the costs involved in making applications, and putting in place an agreement with the Home Office Immigration Service to ensure the quick resolution of these matters. She also noted that the Government contributed significantly to the Last Resort Fund.¹¹ All of these measures demonstrate that the Government has addressed the issue to ensure better protection for vulnerable women whose immigration status is insecure. The Baroness spoke about the need to balance advantageous applications with the need to provide vulnerable women the opportunity to seek safety. She also noted the Government's work with voluntary sector organisations, such as Southall Black Sisters, which has ensured that the protocols and forms are correct. This was of particular importance, as incomplete or incorrect applications had been a large problem in the past. The Baroness said these changes in protocols and forms have been very effective as they help those in the voluntary sector to protect women in a way which is much more powerful than before; and whilst the feedback the Baroness has received from the field has been positive, there is more to do.

(8) For further information please see www.imkaan.org.uk

(9) For further information please see www.nawp.org

(10) The no recourse to public funds rule requires persons coming to the UK to be financially self-sufficient, either through support from their spouse or through working. There is no eligibility to claim social security benefits or housing assistance nor rent costs to access to publicly funded facilities such as refuges.

(11) The Last Resort Fund has been administered by Women's Aid for more than ten years, providing financial assistance to women whose immigration status is insecure. The Fund is contribution based, and in 2004 the Government gave a one-off donation of £40,000 to match a similar amount provided by the Sigrid Rausing Trust.

Debora Singer, Refugee Women's Resource Project¹² Asylum Aid,¹³ reiterating the Baroness's point that domestic violence crosses all social barriers, said that the people she works with are fleeing domestic violence from abroad including forced marriage, honour crimes and FGM. Yet when such women arrive in the UK seeking protection from these human rights abuse they do not automatically qualify for refugee status, but rather have to fight simply to receive humanitarian protection. Deborah questioned the inconsistency of protection and treatment, as women fleeing to the UK to escape such abuse face great difficulty in achieving settled status and safety, as compared to the protection received by British women. Further, if a British woman is taken abroad for FGM or forced marriage the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) will intervene to protect her, yet a woman who comes from abroad is not rescued from the abuse she has suffered.

Baroness Scotland stated that the Government's primary responsibility is to British women. However, the UK has traditionally given assistance to women in desperate circumstances, particularly in relation to asylum. Further, the asylum process is much faster, and the Baroness referred to the procedural changes she mentioned earlier, which ensure that cases are identified to allow fast-tracking and the provision of support as required. However, Baroness Scotland cautioned that each application must be considered on its individual merits and it would be improper to institute a blanket procedure under which simply stating that domestic violence is a factor would automatically allow entry. She said that the Government must make sure that claims are justified and that the procedures are quick, fair, just and effective.

Judy Richards from Brighton, referring to recent articles in the press, asked the Baroness to confirm whether or not the police's "shoot to kill" policy was to be extended to cover cases of domestic violence and stalking. She noted that whilst all the conference delegates abhor domestic violence, human rights must be upheld. If the rumoured policy extension was true, she asked why this was the case and who had been consulted on this, particularly women's groups.

Baroness Scotland informed the conference that she was due to answer a question in the House of Lords on this issue, and denied the existence of a "shoot to kill" policy. She stated that legally, the police are entitled to take reasonable force dependent on the circumstances and the threat posed. Since 1991, in England and Wales, 37 people have died as a result of the police using firearms; and in each case, an investigation concluded that the officers involved used reasonable force in relation to the circumstances. The Baroness told delegates that they could rest assured that human rights are as safe now as they have ever been. She wished the delegates a good conference, as the issue of violence against women is one that must be grappled with and she was proud of the difference that had been made.

The Chair extended her thanks to Baroness Scotland.

(12) For further information please see www.asylumaid.org.uk/New%20RWRP/RWRP_About_RWRP.htm

(13) For further information please see www.asylumaid.org.uk/index.htm

Marai congratulated Rights of Women on thirty years of feminist battle – a battle, full of blood, sweat and tears. Marai gave a short introduction to the nia project (also celebrating its thirtieth anniversary



Marai Larasi addressing the conference.

in 2005) and its work with women and children subjected to gendered violence, including but not limited to domestic violence.¹⁵ Referring to the title of the conference, Marai stated that the law has absolutely everything to do with it. She said that whether laws are held to be right or wrong, just or unjust, they create or deny women's opportunities for redress and open or block access to the most basic support services. Therefore Marai's presentation examined, from a grassroots perspective, what currently works well and what fails miserably.

The first issue Marai addressed was housing. On a positive note she said a number of nia's clients are able to be re-housed under the current homelessness legislation to areas that women identify as safe. However, this effective application of the law is often dependent upon the presence (and assistance) of a nia advocacy worker. Further, the process of interacting with local authorities can, in many cases, be tedious for agencies and stressful for clients. Additionally, in far too many cases the law is not applied effectively, and there is an emphasis on providing "reliable" third party verification of domestic violence, which often does not include evidence from service providers despite their considerable experience of working in this area. Marai also highlighted the legislation's exclusion of a number of women, often those who are most at risk, referring to the examples of "Jenny" and "Janine", real clients of the nia project.

Jenny is 36 years old; she has been involved in street prostitution for a number of years and is a crack and heroin user. She is HIV positive and pregnant with her third child. She gets beaten up by her pimp and partner on a regular basis and has historically had very little support and struggles to engage with agencies. Jenny has therefore struggled to maintain her tenancy and has consequently been deemed to have made herself intentionally homeless, a decision the nia project is challenging.

Janine is a woman with no recourse to public funds, who although she has experienced the most horrific abuse, does not have access to accommodation under the current legislation. She has therefore ended up in one of nia's refuges and they are battling with social services for rent and living expenses.

(14) Marai Larasi is the Executive Director of the nia project (formerly Hackney Women's Aid), for further information please see www.niaproject.info

(15) Services include housing (refuge and resettlement provision), legal and advice services, family support services and training and group work provision. Within this framework specialist services are provided for women involved in street prostitution, Turkish-speaking women, Vietnamese women and women in two prisons – Holloway and Bulwood Hall. Specialist provision has been funded and is being developed around sexual violence and substance misuse and its links to prostitution and domestic violence.

Secondly, Marai addressed the problematic area of immigration. Whilst she welcomed the new provisions of the DV Act 2004 which allow women, subject to the two-year rule,¹⁶ to apply for indefinite leave to remain as long as they meet specific requirements, Marai questioned what happens during the time the application is being processed. She asked how and where does the woman live, what does she eat, how does she survive, who foots the bill, what if she is a student or an over-stayer, what if she can't apply for the domestic violence concession¹⁷ – what then? Marai questioned why such women are not deemed to be enough of a victim to have the right to services and protection, and where the resources are being provided, why it is the already under-resourced women's voluntary sector that is carrying the financial burden? She said that the Last Resort Fund has simply not been enough. Further, Marai said that the opportunity was missed during the consultation process prior to the DV Act to ensure protection for this incredibly vulnerable group of women by revolutionising responses to domestic violence. Despite much lobbying by the women's sector the result is a two-tier system, providing a level of protection to those women entitled to stay in the UK which is not afforded to women whose immigration status is insecure.

The third issue Marai considered was the availability and implementation of civil remedies. She welcomed the recent amendments of the Family Law Act 1996, provided by the DV Act, such as the extension of civil protection to victims in same sex relationships. However, the issue of child contact remains unresolved. Marai highlighted the recent report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration¹⁸ which found that family courts and CAFCASS¹⁹ are placing women and child victims of domestic violence at risk in family court proceedings (a point the women's sector have highlighted for years).

Marai took the opportunity to reiterate the Women's Aid position and its calls on CAFCASS to introduce measures to prioritise the safety of children and adult victims of domestic violence and systematic risk assessment to identify and reduce the risk of perpetrator to their victims; training for all officers in domestic violence and its link to child abuse; mechanisms for seeking children's views about contact; and to assist women to participate fully in decisions relating to their children after separation. Marai also said that Women's Aid has called on the Government to include the following points in the Children and Adoption Bill, mandatory risk assessment for family courts; measures to require the courts to address safety and to ensure contact is safe at the start of proceedings and prior to enforcement; and measures to require domestic violence perpetrators to attend perpetrator

(16) Under this rule a person entering the UK as a spouse or partner of a UK citizen (or those settled in the UK) must remain in the relationship for a probationary period of two years before an application for indefinite leave to remain can be made. The probationary period rose from one to two years under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

(17) The domestic violence concession, introduced in 1999, allows those subject to immigration control, whose marriage breaks down during the probationary year as a result of domestic violence to apply for indefinite leave to remain. In order to make an application under the concession it must be proven that domestic abuse occurred by providing evidence of an injunction, non-molestation order or other protection order against the sponsor; or a relevant court conviction against the sponsor; or full details of a relevant police caution against the sponsor. Following amendments in 2002, where one of the above pieces of evidence is not available, more than one of the following is acceptable: a medical report from a hospital doctor confirming that the applicant has injuries consistent with being the victim of domestic violence/abuse; a letter from a GP who has examined the applicant and is satisfied they have injuries consistent with being the victim of domestic violence/abuse; a police report confirming attendance at the home of the applicant as a result of domestic violence/abuse; a letter from social services confirming its involvement in connection with domestic violence/abuse; and a letter of support or report from a women's refuge.

(18) *Domestic Violence, Safety and Family Proceedings: Thematic review of the handling of domestic violence issues by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) and the administration of family courts in Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS)*, October 2005, available at: www.hmca.gov.uk/files/HMICA_Domestic_violence_linked1.pdf

(19) Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS).

re-education programmes to manage and reduce the risks they pose to children during contact arrangements.

Next Marai considered the more obvious areas of law that impact on the work of service providers, laws which service providers often find are applied oppressively. She failed to understand why the policing of prostitution focuses primarily on the woman selling sex as opposed to the men buying it; how issuing an ASBO and forcing a woman who is clearly at risk into another borough changes anything positively in her life or helps society generally; why a man guilty of a so-called honour killing should receive an absurdly light sentence because cultural factors were taken into account, whilst a Jamaican woman who has a long history of vulnerability and abuse who killed her violent partner had her culture initially ignored and then used against her.

Marai noted that there is almost an inbuilt bias; for the system to work for a woman she has to be an “acceptable” victim or survivor – no immigration issues, no drug and alcohol abuse issues, no involvement in the sex industry, no history of offending, etc. What is more worrying is when the same attitudes are pervasive in the voluntary sector. When refugees ignore their legal duty of care to women who do not fit the criteria; when domestic violence service providers pretend that sexual violence is not a reality for their client group; and when the women’s sector views a woman as having needs that are too complex to afford them their basic human rights. Maria said that whilst those in the sector must look outside, criticise and agitate, they must not be complacent.

Lastly, Marai touched briefly on the climate and context in which the women’s voluntary sector is now delivering services. She noted that the nia project is facing increased pressure to ensure that non-client services posts are available to men. This is justified by reference to the law, essentially using the laws created to challenge sexism to now challenge women’s organisations and the preservation of the right to safe women-only spaces, guided by feminist principles. She questioned why, in 2005, she should have to fight for the right to have a women’s organisation that is governed, managed, staffed, and supported by women, providing services to women and children. Marai said society is still patriarchal, misogyny has not disappeared and neither has the need for such safe women-only spaces. This, she said, is an example of the law failing miserably. Marai ended by saying that delegates should not let a Government tell them that the integrity of the immigration and benefit systems is a greater priority than the precious lives of the women and children the delegates work with.

Yvonne Rhoden²⁰

Yvonne’s presentation focused on how the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) have improved their responses to domestic violence at strategic and operational levels. In the early eighties, domestic violence was not seen as police work, and in a male dominated organisation, was the “tea and biscuits” end of policing. This situation remained for a significant number of years until the former

(20) Yvonne Rhoden is a police officer with the Diversity Directorate, New Scotland Yard, Metropolitan Police Service.

Commissioner Sir John Stevens stated that ‘...domestic violence is one of the most pernicious denials of human rights because it is perpetrated not by strangers but by family members, people in positions of trust.’

Yvonne began by emphasising that domestic violence is now a priority for the MPS, highlighting the structural changes that have occurred. Following the inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, 32 Community Safety Units (one in every London borough) were established, staffed by specially trained officers to investigate alleged hate crime (race and homophobic) and domestic violence. The MPS also established a central unit – the Diversity Directorate (now Territorial Policing Crime) – to drive forward strategy and policy to ensure a multi-agency response. Yvonne spoke about the MPS Domestic Violence Strategy, “*Enough is Enough*” (2001),²¹ which is underpinned by the double aim of supporting victims and holding perpetrators accountable within a multi agency context. The MPS views domestic violence in a broad context (broader than some other agencies) to include intimate partner violence *and* intrafamilial abuse, factors included in the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) determined police definition.



Yvonne Rhoden addressing the conference.

Yvonne provided some statistics on the MPS’s work addressing domestic violence. In 2004-2005, the MPS received 110,658 reports of domestic violence incidents; 20% of murders are domestic violence related (as compared to 33% nationally); domestic violence accounts for 24% of all violent incidents in London and has the highest level of repeat victimisation as compared to any other crime. Further, Yvonne stated that in London, over half of domestic violence serious assault offenders are involved in other areas of serious criminality. Thus, the MPS annually reiterates its commitment to domestic violence by prioritising it in its yearly Policing Plan,²² and it is also a priority in the National Policing Plan. She noted that the new Domestic Violence Strategy, Policy and Standard Operating Procedures, published in November 2004, reflect a more offender-focused approach, building on the positive action message of “*Enough is Enough*”.

Yvonne went on to discuss recent MPS achievements and on-going domestic violence work, such as the new initial reporting form for domestic violence and risk assessment (form 124D) to improve investigation and effective evidence gathering. An agreement has also been reached between the MPS and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) London on bringing domestic violence perpetrators to justice through a process of enhanced evidence gathering.²³ The MPS was also involved in the consultation around the integrated/specialist domestic violence courts that were piloted in London. Yvonne highlighted the MPS newly established Multi-agency Domestic Violence Murder Reviews

(21) For further information please see: www.met.police.uk/dv/files/strategy.pdf

(22) For the 2005 Policing Plan please see: www.mpa.gov.uk/downloads/reports/policingplan2005-06.pdf

(23) MPS-CPS Service Level Agreement for Domestic Violence Cases available at: http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/agencies/dv/sla_cps_metpolice.html#01

which examine the antecedents to domestic homicide and determine any lessons to be learnt. Analysis from these reviews has been used to design the new MPS (SPECCS+) risk identification process which assists safety planning.

Yvonne spoke about police work with advocacy and crisis intervention workers to deliver enhanced victim care. Currently half of all CSUs in London work alongside colleagues from the voluntary and statutory sector. The police are working to widen access to advocacy services, and continue to seek further funding opportunities for such work, for example through Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). The MPS have found that the presence of advocacy or crisis intervention workers in CSU's dramatically affects the rates of repeat victimisation, with a reduction of 33% in one London borough.

Yvonne discussed the work of the MPS Forced Marriage Project Team which has been at the forefront of strategic and operational policing initiatives to address forced marriage and MPS responses. Related to this, is the work to identify emerging domestic violence issues within a BME context, including issues such as so-called "honour" related crimes and FGM.

Yvonne discussed the MPS's identification of serious and prolific offenders, and targeting domestic violence perpetrators for the other areas of criminality they are involved in, which accounts for 80% of operations led by the Proactive Task Force against Domestic Violence Offenders (TP Crime). She noted that the MPS has undertaken a series of coordinated arrest days across London against domestic violence offenders (Operation Athena) in September 2003, December 2004 and March 2005 resulting in 114, 202 and 224 arrests, respectively.

Yvonne spoke about MPS media campaigns, highlighting the September 2003 and February 2004 radio and poster campaign 'Your partner's silence will no longer protect you', targeting perpetrators and indicating the MPS ability to take action without the support of victims. This was the first police campaign to focus solely on offenders and was followed in March 2005 with the campaign 'There are no safe houses for men who commit domestic violence', which specifically targeted male offenders, who comprise 85% of offenders in crimes reported to police. Yvonne said this campaign sets out the MPS intention to focus on perpetrators in clear terms, underlining the commitment to hold them accountable for their actions.

Lastly, Yvonne spoke about Project Umbra, which aims to improve service delivery across all sectors involved in domestic violence by co-ordinating a range of options available to both victims and perpetrators. This multi agency initiative is supported by the London Criminal Justice Board with statutory and non-statutory partner agencies including Greater London Domestic Violence Project, Women's Aid, the Home Office, CDRPs, Prison and Probation Services and others. Yvonne stated that investment in partnerships has been instrumental to the changes that had taken place and the MPS continues to aim for improvement. She said the measure of these changes will be whether the

MPS can meet the 2am in the morning test.²⁴ She concluded by saying that Project Umbra should lead to improved police responses, hold more offenders accountable, provide holistic support to victims, prevent serious violence and ultimately save lives.

Yvonne finished by showing delegates examples of the posters used in various MPS domestic violence media campaigns, reiterating the focus on perpetrators. The posters were purposely displayed in areas where men congregate, such as football grounds and participating sports clubs. She highlighted the most recent campaigns in the London underground which moved away from the picture driven campaigns to focus on the stark realities of domestic violence. Yvonne noted that, interestingly, every time the MPS have run perpetrator-focused campaigns there have been controversial responses from the male lobby arguing that women also commit abuse. However she stated that the MPS stands by its campaign, which has been one of the more effective campaigns of recent years and they are committed to running more.

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Question and Answer Session

Bear Montique, ADVANCE,²⁵ asked Yvonne whether the police are monitoring the effect of the recent change in responsibility for charging individuals with offences, which has now been handed over to the CPS (previously, the police had charging responsibility), as there had been a significant drop in the number of cases reaching the domestic violence court in Hammersmith.

Yvonne Rhoden said that this is an issue that CSUs are repeatedly raising within the MPS. She said, from an MPS perspective, there needs to be more challenging of CPS decisions. The MPS have found that there are less concerns when the CPS representative is based in the station, the problematic issues tend to arise when using the out of hours CPS Direct Service, often resulting in a lack of consistency in charging decisions. Yvonne said that the MPS is working with the CPS on

(24) This refers to the ability of the Police to be able respond effectively and put into practice its policies and lessons learnt.

(25) ADVANCE (Advocacy and Non Violence Community Education), for further information please see: www.advanceadvocacyproject.org.uk

trying to obtain a level of consistency in charging decisions around domestic violence. The MPS recognise the concerns around perpetrators being arrested and then bailed or released without any further action which puts the victim at risk.

Rebekah Wilson, barrister (Tooks Chambers)²⁶ and member of Rights of Women Management Committee noted that domestic violence and rape have the highest attrition rates in the criminal justice system. In her experience of dealing with committals for breaches, police officers often prefer the breach to be dealt with in the civil courts because it can be dealt with faster, more appropriately, with harder sentences and greater compliance with the non-molestation order. Rebekah wanted to know if the police are given guidance about which court system to use and how this advice is given.

Yvonne Rhoden said that where there is a breach of a civil order, officers are advised that they must bring the offender before the courts at the earliest opportunity. She agreed that some officers have found quicker recourse to justice in the civil courts, in



Conference delegate during the question and answer session.

cases of a straightforward breach. The link to charging was again highlighted, as Yvonne noted that where an offender has breached a civil order and a criminal offence has also been committed, police officers, as members of the criminal justice system, instinctively turn to the criminal courts. Yvonne said the MPS is trying to encourage officers to deal more effectively with orders, and have conducted a significant amount of raising awareness around breaches and the new police powers and procedures under the DV Act. She said that in the meantime the focus is on raising awareness of the use of civil rather than criminal courts and the impact that charging decisions can have on a victim's ability to attain justice.

Jill Richards, Women's Aid, Monmouthshire, Wales²⁷ said it was refreshing to hear about the MPS's proactive initiatives and asked whether this identified good practice would filter out to other forces, such as in Wales. Jill highlighted the current situation at Women's Aid, Monmouthshire, where focus groups, as part of an ongoing gap analysis of services in the Blaenau Gwent area, have identified police responses to domestic violence as a significant barrier to reporting. The police have further told the organisation that they do not have the resources to identify repeat victims of domestic abuse. Jill also referred to the no recourse to public funds issue; the Government gave Wales £5000 under the Last Resort scheme, which was exhausted within the first month. This has become a major issue both within Women's Aid nationally and in her group, where the workers are providing donations from

(26) For further information please see: www.tooks.co.uk/

(27) For further information please see: www.waimon.org.uk/links.cfm

their wages to support women with no recourse. She asked whether this is an issue that the women's sector could campaign around.

Yvonne Rhoden, in relation to the first part of the question, said that some forces are utilising best practice, referring to South Wales where police are conducting domestic violence murder reviews and using risk assessment and safety identification models and processes. Yvonne acknowledged a blanket application of best practice throughout the UK was needed to avoid the postcode lottery that some women experience around responses to domestic violence. From the MPS experience, she said that it was easier to get the required commitment from top officials once the analysis had been conducted demonstrating that domestic violence outstrips any other crime. She noted that whilst there is a focus on street crime, the figures for domestic violence currently outweigh it, and the knock on effects of domestic violence as opposed to street crime are far more long-running. Therefore, she said that domestic violence needs to be a priority area for policing. Yvonne also spoke about the importance of training and the MPS commitment to train all 30,000 officers in dealing with domestic violence; 13,000 officers have already received training from police trainers in conjunction with voluntary sector workers. She said whilst there have been issues over cost and money, the ultimate priority is saving lives.

Marai Larasi, addressing the issue of no recourse to public funds, was critical of a situation where workers have to contribute their own money to support women, an example which indicates the extent of the problem. She said that the nia project has a deficit of £40,000 which is solely attributed to supporting women that have no recourse to public funds; the same amount could fund a new staff post at the organisation. She said that Women's Aid continues to lobby the Government on this issue, in conjunction with Southall Black Sisters, and noted that delegates may wish to make links with each other to campaign on this issue from a grassroots perspective.

Catherine Unwin, Victim Support, Lewisham²⁸ had delivered training to Lewisham police in 2005 as one of the voluntary sector partner agencies. She commented that the training package was well thought out and during the delivery it was evident that the police officers began to understand issues around domestic violence and repeat victimisation, and the difficulty women face in leaving such situations. She said that there was very positive feedback from the officers involved in the training, which has fed into better performance and service delivery in Lewisham. Catherine asked whether the MPS had thought about the impact of the domestic violence perpetrator-focused campaigns; noting the potential for such publicity to push abuse further underground or impact negatively on reporting.

Yvonne Rhoden said that the MPS had long and hard deliberations about the focus of its campaign. However, she said that the figures have borne out the strategy; since launching reporting has increased rather than deterring women from coming forward. Yvonne said the MPS recognises the

(28) For further information please see www.victimsupport.org.uk/vs_england_wales/contacts/lewisham/site_info/legal.php

risks involved in a perpetrator-focused campaign; but also noted that much of the criticism of the campaigns has been from the male lobby. The campaigns form part of the MPS commitment to hold perpetrators to account (one of the two MPS overarching aims in dealing with domestic violence); focussing solely on the victims only deals with half of the issue. She also said that the MPS is taking responsibility away from the victim by dealing with the violent offender. Whilst the MPS recognises that some victims may not want investigation or prosecution, the police have to think not only about the best interests of the present victim, but also about future victims and their children. She said the MPS has to look at long-term as well as short strategies, and that the organisation has shoulders broad enough to take the criticism.

Alison Stanley, solicitor (Bindmans and Partners)²⁹ and Refugee Women's Legal Group, noting that both over staying and illegal entry are criminal offences, asked what the MPS policy is for assisting such women experiencing domestic violence.

Yvonne Rhoden said that the MPS has directed officers to consider the domestic violence as the priority and all other issues are secondary. She noted that the MPS have found it challenging to assist women with no recourse to public funds to access services. She said that it is not appropriate for a woman presenting at the police station in an emergency situation to spend the night in the front office of the station, but the police find it is very difficult to access refuges, and officers are often directed to homelessness units or inappropriately to hostels, or no help is provided.

Adebola Jay-Alechenu, Standing Together against Domestic Violence,³⁰ said that the MPS centrally identifies high risk victims and informs the boroughs, using the risk assessment model - form 124D. She asked whether there are any directives from the MPS for a systematic roll out of multi-agency risk assessment so that various agencies, organisations and victims advocates can work alongside the MPS in a more systematic and holistic manner.

Yvonne Rhoden said that the form 124D identification process should act as a gateway for the victim to other services. The form provides guidance for when immediate police services are needed, as in the case of high-risk victims, but also contains space to look at what options are available to the victim, what agencies should be involved in the risk assessment process and safety planning. She said that the process should not be static, or a one-off, it should be periodically reviewed by the CSU (the secondary investigators) to determine whether the risk has dissipated or increased, and appropriate courses of action taken, including in partnership with other organisations. In response to the issue of multi-agency reviews, Yvonne said that the large volume of domestic violence cases in London prohibits having such panels due to the resources that would be required. She said that to try and plug this gap the MPS centrally reviews high risk cases on a daily basis (conducted by Yvonne's team), highlighting actions to be taken or agencies that could be involved, examining methods to increase safety and reviewing the investigating strategy.

(29) For further information please see www.bindmans.com

(30) This organisation coordinates the specialist domestic violence court in Hammersmith and Fulham For further information please see www.standingtogether.org.uk

Anita Ediale, Toynbee Housing Association,³¹ noted that whilst much of the discussion has focused on women with no recourse to public funds, there are additional problems with the current housing legislation. In particular, single women fleeing domestic violence are classed as a priority but they fail the vulnerability test under the current legislation, despite being vulnerable; this appears to be an easy way out of addressing the non-availability of housing stock. She asked Marai what work is being done to review the legislation, particularly in relation to women fleeing domestic violence.

Marai Larasi said she was not aware of any current work in this area, beyond working at an individual case-by-case basis. She did note the nia project's recent experience of a shift in the attitude of local authorities that previously work well around these issues are now no longer responding in the same manner. The nia project therefore looks very carefully at each case and highlights other issues which may be additional vulnerabilities. She encouraged the questioner to engage in a discussion about this further with the nia project. She added that this is a real problem, as the situation appears to be getting worse rather than better.

Helen Avison, Calderdale Women's Centre,³² said that her organisation has a worker who accompanies the police domestic violence coordinators into women's homes to provide direct emotional and practical support following a domestic violence incident. She also spoke about MARACs – Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences – which are conducted in her local area (Halifax, West Yorkshire). MARACs involve monthly meetings of partner agencies (including representatives from the voluntary sector, police, health services and housing) to discuss high risk cases which any member can bring to the table. Each member takes away an action to complete, such as child protection work, supporting women, or targeting hardening measures. She said the MARAC process may be rolled out into the whole region. Helen wanted to highlight that it is possible to conduct such reviews, although she appreciated the difficulties of operating in an area with as many boroughs as in London, but noted that reviews can be monthly.

Yvonne Rhoden said that London does not have the monopoly on good ideas and there are instances of best practice all over the country that the MPS learns from. She also spoke about the recently announced restructuring of the police in the UK, which will reduce the number of forces from over 40 to fifteen. In this context, Yvonne said it is important that best practice present in smaller forces is not diluted or lost in the creation of super forces. She also reiterated that domestic violence should remain a priority for policing following the restructure, and hoped that instances of best practice will be harnessed and rolled out.

The Chair, Carol Valentine, thanked all the speakers for their presentations. Summarising the morning session she said that the conference delegates had heard about advances in addressing domestic violence, both in general and in areas such as forced marriage and FGM, as well as hearing about the importance of partnership and multi-agency working and training. Discussions of

(31) For further information please see www.toynbeeha.co.uk/index.htm

(32) For further information please see www.calderdale-online.org/cwc/

legislation and where this is making a difference were also noted. The Chair concluded by saying that challenges remain, particularly in the areas of human rights, child abuse, housing, and training, issues which would be explored further in the subsequent conference workshops.

Workshop Reports

The Chair, Ranjit Kaur, Director of Rights of Women invited each of the five workshop reporters to provide a summary of the proceedings. Each reporter was feeding back on the two sessions of each workshop.

Workshop 1: Domestic Violence – Is the Arm of the Law Long Enough?³³ Rebekah Wilson reported that the workshops began by examining the failings of both the criminal and the civil justice systems, followed by suggested solutions.

Four specific issues were highlighted during the workshops, the first of which were the inconsistencies in evidence collection between different police forces. Secondly, there is a lack of understanding and information available to victims of domestic violence; which is a particular problem for victims that are refugees, illegal over-stayers, or who require the services of a translator.



Emma Scott facilitating workshop 1.

Thirdly, there are particular problems associated with perpetrators that are also police officers, a situation which has been the subject of a number of calls to the Rights of Women advice line. It was noted that this is a particular problem in smaller areas. The last issue which was discussed were problems with the criminal court system, including the lack of information available to victims.

The workshops' participants identified the several possible solutions. These included making complaints where the police had failed the victim, but also recognising instances where police officers have provided a good service. The general point was made that whilst everyone is under-resourced and over-stretched, there is a need for a multi-disciplinary approach to domestic violence. There was much discussion of the integrated court in Hammersmith and its successes. One problem which was highlighted was the arrest and charging of suspects followed by release without bail conditions. This allows him to return to the place of the alleged domestic violence, and creates concerns for the victim's safety. One of the solutions offered was the provision of lawyers for the victims throughout the court process, similar to procedures in Denmark. It was noted that during the

(33) This workshop was conducted by Emma Scott, Senior Legal Officer at Rights of Women.

General Election, the Labour Party raised the possibility of such a provision for certain violent offences. This proposal has since been dropped by the Government; however, the workshops' participants felt the proposal still had much value and merited further consideration. The participants stressed that training for all involved in the civil and criminal justice systems was required to raise understanding of what constitutes domestic violence and the processes and remedies that are available.

The workshops also identified the real gap between the civil and criminal courts, despite the fact that cases in both courts are often inter-linked, particularly in resolving contact where violence is an issue. There is thus a need to for the courts to share information. The final issue highlighted was the continued erosion of civil legal aid scheme and the lack of access to justice for women. As the conference heard in the morning, breach of non-molestation orders will be arrestable offences under the DV Act. However, this is problematic because many women cannot afford to go to court to apply a non-molestation order in the first place. Rebekah noted that legislation is only as good as the people enforcing it, and there is a real worry that this won't be done properly given the increasing cuts to the legal aid budget.

Workshop 2: Rape, the Law, Process and Reality:³⁴ Elizabeth Walker focused on three issues that were raised by the workshop participants – concerns related to the legal profession, education and information, and supporting victims.

It was noted that the existing entitlement for victims to see a CPS lawyer are not sufficient; access to the prosecuting lawyer is problematic and there is no on-going contact. A possible solution to this could be the creation of a national system of advocates, trained but not necessarily legally qualified, as is already the case in Denmark. Workshop participants discussed the background of judges and



Conference delegate participating in a workshop.

barristers and the need for the legal profession to be more representative of society. It was also suggested that there needs to be more general monitoring and independent evaluation of the whole process, with particular emphasis on the accountability of judges' decisions.

(34) This workshop was conducted by Nadine Sime, a Legal Officer at Rights of Women.

Several different strands to education and information provision were discussed by the workshops. It was suggested that secondary schools should be targeted, so that attitudes can be challenged from a young age. Workshop participants also thought that victims of sexual violence should be provided with information to make their own decisions. However there were related concerns that victims should not be overloaded with too much information, such as the low conviction rate, as this may put some many women off proceeding. In particular there needs to be more information about what constitutes rape, particularly in light of the new definitions brought in by the Sexual Offences Act 2003. The workshops also called for general public awareness raising campaigns to counteract myths about sexual violence, and in particular the need to challenge media portrayals of sexual violence which often discredit women. Finally, it was suggested that the judiciary undertake specialist training and perhaps specialist judges should be created.

The workshop then identified the need to support victims, who are technically witnesses to prosecutions (as cases are brought in the name of the State rather than the victim). It was suggested that increased support is likely to encourage increased reporting, and may possibly increase conviction rates. More specifically, special measures for vulnerable witnesses³⁵ should be more accessible, whilst it should be standard practice to apply for these in advance of the hearing, there should be a greater ability to apply on the day, especially as the victim will have had little or no previous contact with the CPS. It was suggested that restraining orders should be an automatic bail condition, as there is no protection in place to keep a perpetrator away from a victim pending the hearing. Finally, the workshop participants said that there needed to be more rape havens, noting that examining and counselling facilities can encourage greater prospects of success.

Workshop 3: Break the Silence Stop the Violence:³⁶ Jennifer Moate summarised the workshop discussions into recent initiatives by the CPS, problems and concerns with current practice and suggested improvements.

The first initiative discussed was the transfer of charging responsibility to the CPS from the police for charging (CPS staff are present in stations Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, and out-of-hours CPS Direct is used). This initiative has been useful because it involves prosecutors from the start of an investigation. Secondly, the evidential test, which has previously been a barrier is now being overcome, and as a matter of course, the CPS are now holding the public interest test to have been passed, where the evidential test is passed. These charging initiatives are due to be expanded and by March 2006 they will be instituted in 33 police forces.

The second initiative discussed were the specialist integrated domestic violence courts, which have specially trained prosecutors, dealing with domestic violence incidents ranging from assault to rape. These courts are also capable of dealing with special equipment such as screens and video evidence. The conviction rates are higher than for ordinary courts, and this may be attributable to the

(35) Special measures are gradually being introduced into courtrooms to reduce the victim's stress in giving evidence. Special measures include screens to shield the victim from the defendant, giving evidence from another room via live video-link, pre-recorded videotape of evidence and/or cross examined, removal of the formal court attire from the officials, assistance in giving evidence if there are problems understanding or speaking, and/or the judge clearing the public gallery of people.

(36) This workshop was conducted by Tivoli Wallington from the Crown Prosecution Service Policy Directorate.

increased awareness of the prosecutors and the focus of the court in addressing domestic violence. The cross over between criminal and civil courts was also discussed, which included consideration of non-molestation orders, which are currently civil orders, but under the DV Act, breach of an order would constitute a criminal offence (once this part of the DV Act is in force). However, workshop participants expressed some concerns with this, noting that the increased case load would put further strain on the already stretched court space.

The first problem that was discussed related to the release of perpetrators on bail without conditions, allowing them to return to the victim and perpetrate further emotional or physical abuse. The integrated courts, could however, present a solution to this as they could allow one judge to hear both civil and criminal issues, providing the judge with a more complete picture of the situation when dealing with the bail conditions. A second problem the workshops identified related to difficulties with evidence collection. One suggestion which provoked controversy was the idea of communicating with midwives, doctors, and other health professionals, as they are in a unique position to spot emotional or physical changes in women. However, other workshop participants raised serious concerns over confidentiality, and the possibility that women would withdraw from seeking health services if confidentiality were compromised. In such situations consent would need to be sought; however the current legal position was reiterated, namely if the life of the woman or where she is pregnant the life of her unborn child were at risk, then confidentiality can be overborne.

The third problematic issue discussed was the Law Commission review of the law on homicide,³⁷ and more specifically, the discriminatory application of the provocation defence. It was noted that men often argue they were suddenly provoked into killing a woman and claim the partial defence with a reduced charge of manslaughter. However, a woman who has suffered long-term abuse with a slow burn build up to killing their abusers is unlikely to be able to successfully argue provocation and upon conviction for murder is subject to an automatic life sentence. Participants raised concerns as to how this injustice would be addressed by the review.

Fourthly, workshop participants thought it was problematic that prosecutors do not meet the victim prior to her giving evidence at trial. Participants believed it would be useful to have pre-trial interviews, not for the purposes of coaching, but to ensure that the case is put across in the best possible way. Lastly, it was noted that the Mental Health Act had not been discussed thus far during the conference. Participants said that it is important to note that perpetrators of domestic violence may have mental health issues. Thus links with the health service are important and ensuring perpetrators receive required medical assistance may prevent some instances of domestic violence.

(37) Subsequent to the ROW Conference, the Law Commission published its consultation paper (No. 177) on this issue on 20th December 2005, titled: 'A New Homicide Act for England and Wales?', available at: www.lawcom.gov.uk

Workshop 4: Forced Marriage and Honour Crimes:³⁸ Sanchita Hosali reported on three main points that emerged in the workshop session, noting that many of the issues raised were interrelated.

Firstly, the majority of the presentation in the workshop focused on the cultural context of forced marriage and honour crimes. Whilst these are forms of domestic violence and violence against women, and thus are part of a universal phenomena, forced marriage and honour crimes are a specific manifestations. Thus the idea of culture is important, particularly in understanding three main areas, namely barriers preventing victims from coming forward; perpetrators using culture to justify their violence; and culture acting as a barrier to services for the victim, including impacting on the ability of organisations and agencies to provide specific and appropriate services.

Secondly, the workshops discussed strategies of response, noting the inappropriateness of immigration measures in combating forced marriage and honour crimes, and the importance of education. Within the discussion on education, participants raised the issue of inter-generational education. It was noted that there are palpable shifts in attitudes between difference generations, and whilst it is important to educate children and young people at school, there needs to be recognition that outside of the school context they may face attitude barriers. Thus there is a need for education which feeds into a wider community perspective. Further, in terms of education for young people, the workshops identified a differential between girls and boys. Evidence suggests that it is women and girls that are the predominant victims of forced marriage and honour crimes. This is not to suggest that boys/men are not also victims, but for girls there is a need for empowerment through education to inform them of their rights and what can be done in these situations. For boys, there was also a need to provide education so that they can be empowered to critically assess their own attitudes and wider patriarchal attitudes – attitudes which are not specific to any one culture or community, but cut across all communities. However, in the context of the specific manifestation of forced marriage and honour crimes, it is important to provide education to empower both girls and boys.

The final point of discussion focused on how to support women and women's organisations, both those working on violence against women in general, and those that are working specifically on forced marriage and honour crimes or violence against women in BME communities. In terms of funding for service providers, the workshops identified the problematic nature of the competitiveness that is emerging in the women's sector as a result of the competition for funding. The workshop participants felt it was important for the women's sector to regroup and come together, to maintain differences but be able to lobby effectively. Also problematic is the general lack of funding for the women's sector, underpinned by the lack of political importance assigned to gender. In terms of forced marriage and honour crimes this funding shortage is compounded by an institutionally racist attitude; thus funding is lacking due to the focus on gender and further still by the context of race and ethnicity. Participants suggested, as a possible solution to this issue, that the conference report could include a list of delegates contact details to allow individuals and organisations to make links,

(38) This workshop was conducted by Arvinder Lall, a Community Outreach Worker at Ashiana Project.

particularly with organisations across the country (in this regard please see Annex III containing a list of conference delegates). Lastly, it was suggested that the government consultation on the criminalisation of forced marriage could provide an opportunity for the women's sector to work in partnership and take work on forced marriage forward, from a feminist perspective.

Workshop 5: Women Seeking Asylum, Women Seeking Protection from Violence:³⁹ Maureen O'Hara began by discussing the workshop presentation which provided background information on the situation of women fleeing their country of origin and seeking asylum in the UK.

A recurring theme in the workshops was the two tiers of protection from violence in the UK, under which women who are British citizens or have indefinite leave to remain, have a higher level of protection, than those seeking asylum. Under the International Refugee Convention 1951 a person can claim asylum on the basis that they are experiencing persecution in their country of origin and the State protection from that persecution is not adequate. The 1951 Convention sets out the grounds on which persecution can be claimed – race, religion, nationality, political opinion and membership of a particular group. Gender is not a specific ground. The Convention is very much based on male experience of persecution – usually persecution by the State – with very little consideration of the experience of women's persecution, which can include State persecution, but which is often manifested as violence and abuse from individuals. Thus historically, it has been very difficult for women to achieve protection under the Convention.

The workshop also discussed the procedural and practical difficulties women asylum-seekers face. Often, when they claim asylum, particularly in relation to gender-specific persecution, women are often not believed. Additionally, the process is not sensitive to the needs of women, for example the traumatisation that women who have experienced rape or other sexual violence may feel is not sufficiently recognised and women are often interviewed by men. Rape is often viewed as an individual crime, rather than a political crime (or weapon), and women are regularly told they should simply return to a different part of the country (known as "internal flight"). This however, is not always appropriate for women; it is often difficult for women (as opposed to men) to return to another part of the country, particularly if they are single or lone parents. Often there is inadequate information about what is happening to women in particular countries and a consequent lack of evidence which can be used in asylum claims. Thus for a range of reasons, it can be more difficult for women than men to make asylum claims in the UK.

In relation to trafficking, the workshop noted that whilst there are initiatives against trafficking, the Government often views it as an immigration issue, rather than an issue of protecting the trafficked women. However, in 2004 the Home Office adopted Gender Guidelines, following sustained lobbying

(39) This workshop was conducted by Debora Singer and Clare Palmer of the Refugee Women's Resource Project at Asylum Aid.

from the women's sector, which set out best practice for responding to women refugee claimants. Guidance includes using same sex interviewers and interpreters when questioning women about their experiences of violence, and the reasons for their claims. Whilst the measures set out in the Guidelines are not guaranteed, women do have the right to request them, and the Home Office has said that if these requests are made in advance, they will make every effort to comply. The Guidelines specifically look at recognising the trauma of experiencing sexual violence, and the impact this can have on the ability to remember or recount what has happened. The Guidelines also provide for women to be interviewed alone, away from their husband or children, as women may not want to recount their experiences in front of their families, and it may be that their husbands are subjecting them to violence, which they cannot discuss in his presence. However, there is very low awareness of the Guidelines and even where there is implementation it is not consistent.

Key issues and recommendations which emerged from the workshops included the need to challenge the hierarchy of protection for women from violence based on their citizenship or immigration status. All women should have similar protections from violence. The Government should also provide greater protection to women from violence in the context of asylum. For example, in relation to trafficking, rather than rigidly focusing on immigration controls and access to public funds the safety and protection of the women involved should be paramount. The workshop participants thought that the Gender Guidelines should be widely publicised, so that women and their representatives (lawyers, caseworkers, and advocates) are aware of their existence and can seek to implement them. Similarly, many of the participants were not aware of the National Asylum Support Service policy bulletin on domestic violence,⁴⁰ which discusses the availability of refuge for women whose asylum claims have not yet been determined. This needs to be more widely publicised so that women and their representatives can access such funding.

The participants also noted the general failure of international law to protect women from violence, and the fact that the UK, and other States party to various treaties are failing women because they are not taking violence against women seriously enough. States are not instituting the policies and measures to protect women and provide asylum. The final issue discussed was the destitution of women who have made asylum claims that have failed or women that are in the UK illegally, and so do not have recourse to public funds, and who are excluded from accessing protection.

(40) Available at: <http://www.asylumsupport.info/bulletin18.htm>

Afternoon Session – Violence against Women: Is there Refuge Within the Law?

Alison Stanley⁴¹

Alison Stanley congratulated Rights of Women on their thirtieth anniversary. Her presentation focused on positive developments in immigration and gender, and she noted the changes in the



Alison Stanley addressing the conference.

police treatment of most women victims of domestic violence, referring to Yvonne Rhoden's earlier presentation. Whilst domestic violence is a universal problem, for women whose immigration status is not secure, the impact of domestic violence can be even more serious than for those already settled in the UK. Alison focused on the domestic violence concession and the effect of the 'no recourse to public funds' rule, and also touched on asylum and human rights, the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), and legal aid.

Prior to the introduction of the domestic violence concession, Alison said that if a marriage broke down during the two year probationary period, women had to return to their home countries as "rejected" wives, which was an often a difficult, if not impossible, prospect. Alternatively many were forced to remain in abusive relationships because they were unable to access benefits due to the 'no recourse to public funds' rule'. Southall Black Sisters (SBS) mounted a long campaign on this issue, highlighting the absence of migrant women from domestic violence debates. In June 1999, the domestic violence concession was introduced, under which women who could prove domestic violence using specified 'hard evidence' – such as a police caution, a full injunction or a conviction⁴² – could apply for settlement in the UK. Alison noted that whilst the concession was a step forward, its application was inconsistent. However, further campaigning led to amendments of the concession under which additional evidence such a medical or social worker report, police intervention reports, or evidence of an undertaking by the abuser⁴³ could be used where 'hard' evidence is not available.

Alison highlighted some of the drawbacks of the concession, such as the inability of women to access benefits whilst applications are pending, thus the rule only assists those able to financially

(41) Alison Stanley is a solicitor and partner at the London-based civil liberties firm Bindmans and Partners. For further information please see www.bindmans.com

(42) An injunction, non-molestation order or other protective order against the sponsor (other than an ex parte or interim order); or a relevant court conviction against the sponsor (i.e. the husband); or full details of a relevant police caution issued against the sponsor.

(43) The full list is: a medical report from a hospital doctor confirming that the applicant has injuries consistent with being the victim of domestic violence; a letter from a GP who has examined the applicant and is satisfied that they have injuries consistent with being the victim of domestic violence; an undertaking given to a court that the perpetrator of the violence will not approach the applicant who is the victim of violence; a police report confirming attendance at the home of the applicant as a result of domestic violence; a letter from social services confirming its involvement in connection domestic violence; or a letter of support or report from a women's refuge. The list of acceptable agencies was extended in November 2004 to include expert agencies such as SBS.

support themselves. Secondly the evidential issues remain, particularly in relation to obtaining documentary proof of police intervention. Thirdly, the rule only applies to those in the UK as spouses or cohabiting partners; it does not apply to third country national spouses or cohabitees admitted under EU law, dependants of students, work permit holders, over-stayers, women in the UK illegally – such women have to look to asylum and human rights law.

Alison briefly spoke about the Refugee Women’s Legal Group (RWLG) – formed in 1996 to develop a gendered perspective on refugee law and policy – and the group’s Gender Guidelines⁴⁴ published in 1998. Following lengthy and tenacious campaigning, the then Immigration Appellate Authority introduced its own gender guidelines in 2000, followed by the Home Office guidelines in 2004. Alison said that the Home Office Gender Guidelines are good (although not as good as RWLG’s) and their introduction was a positive step.⁴⁵

Alison said that refugee law is traditionally considered to be gender neutral. However, whilst the language is neutral the effect of the provisions is not, and women’s experiences are typically marginalised. She said that the conventional analysis of the 1951 Convention frequently identifies a refugee as an individual involved in traditional politics, and this narrow interpretation results in an essentially masculine concept of a ‘refugee’ which excludes many women from protection (as well as some men). Outlining the law, Alison cited the definition of a refugee under article 1A of the Convention, as one who ‘... owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...’ She said that there is no universally accepted definition of persecution but the well known Hathaway equation, approved by the House of Lords,⁴⁶ states that persecution is serious harm plus the failure of the state to protect.

Addressing each of the elements of persecution, Alison said that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Handbook⁴⁷ defines ‘serious harm’ as a ‘threat to life and freedom’ and ‘other serious violations of human rights’ (para 51). She said that women’s experiences should be analysed in the light of internationally accepted principles of human rights noting the examples of rape in conflict situations such as Darfur or Bosnia (although the motivation, ethnic cleansing, was political), and FGM, forced sterilisation or abortion, discriminatory social mores, marriage related harm and violence within the family. Alison said that all of these examples can demonstrate extreme forms of harm, clearly sufficient to meet the definition of persecution. However, in practice domestic violence is not considered to be ‘serious harm’ despite the Home Office Gender Guidelines specifically stating that violence within the family or community can potentially be a form of persecution.⁴⁸

(44) Available at: www.asylumaid.org.uk/New%20RWRP/Campaigning%20and%20Lobbying/RWLG.genderguidelines.pdf

(45) Gender Guidelines in the Asylum Claim (Home Office)

www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/laws_policy/policy_instructions/apis/gender_issues_in_the.html?

(46) *Islam v SSHD; R v IAT ex parte Shah* [1999] INLR 144, Imm AR 283 (HL)

(47) UNHCR Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status, available at: www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/publ/openssl.pdf?tbl=PUBL&id=3d58e13b4

(48) Home Office, Asylum Policy Instructions, Gender Issues in the Asylum Claim, paragraph 3

Turning to the second element of the Hathaway equation, 'failure of the State to protect', Alison said that this is easier to identify where the State is the persecutory agent (e.g. where security forces commit the persecutory act). The position is less clear where the harm is committed by 'private actors' such as a relative. In such situations, it is necessary to look at whether the State is unwilling or unable to protect. Alison gave the example of a State where there is official legislation which discriminates against women, such as providing an honour defence in so called 'honour killings'. Alison also discussed the position of women trafficked for prostitution who are often subjected to gross physical and mental abuse and who have historically received little protection under the 1951 Convention. Alison noted the major difficulty is getting a finding of 'inadequate State protection', even where trafficking is a crime. However, she did say that recently there have been slow changes on this issue, referring to the Home Office's 'Trafficking Tool Kit'⁴⁹ and funding of the Poppy Project, providing safe housing and support to women trafficked into the sex industry.

Returning to the definition of a refugee, Alison noted that gender is not one of the five grounds on which persecution can be founded. She said that women's experiences have frequently been lumped into the 'catch all' of 'Particular Social Group' (PSG). Alison then spoke about the House of Lords case *Shah and Islam*,⁵⁰ where the court held that two Pakistani women accused of adultery and at risk of harm due to the discriminatory nature of *sharia* law practised in Pakistan were part of a PSG. Whilst *Shah and Islam* was a highpoint in the gendered analysis of refugee law, Alison noted the low point of the recent Court of Appeal case of *Fornah*⁵¹ involving a young Sierra Leonean woman who had not undergone FGM. A majority of the court held that the defining characteristics of the group were too close to the persecution feared; thus, the PSG cannot be defined by reference to the persecution feared. The court found that once a woman has undergone FGM she cannot then fear having it performed, which Alison said betrayed a woeful lack of knowledge about the continuing, life long harmful effects of FGM.

Alison was critical of the judgment's cultural relativism,⁵² and the Court's reliance on the misogynist submissions made by the barrister for the Home Office, although she noted that there was a minority judgement (by a woman judge, Arden LJ) and that the case is going to the House of Lords. *Fornah* shows some of the limitations of the PSG analysis of women's experiences, and argued that both the *Shah and Islam* and *Fornah* could have been analysed under the Convention Ground of political opinion, both actual and imputed. Resistance to societal norms or prevailing power structures can be perceived as political, even if the woman concerned does not perceive it as such.

Alison touched upon the incorporation of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law in 2000, through the Human Rights Act 1998. She said that an experience(s) which founds a refugee claim can also found a human rights claim, particularly under article 3 – the absolute prohibition on inhumane or degrading treatment. Further, unlike the Refugee Convention, the woman

(49) Available at: www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/tp00.htm

(50) *Islam v SSHD; R v IAT ex parte Shah* [1999] INLR 144, Imm AR 283 (HL)

(51) *Fornah* [2005] EWCA Civ 680

(52) The leading judgement included the remark that FGM is accepted by the majority of the population, and through undergoing it a young woman moves "into adulthood, fit for marriage and to take a full part as women in the life of their communities" Auld LJ at 44 (2) and is therefore somehow acceptable when it happens to Sierra Leonean women, although of course, finding the practice abhorrent generally.

does not need to show a Convention ground, and so does not have to make the convoluted arguments that have characterised the discussion around PSG. Additionally, many recent amendments have equalised the two categories, albeit at the lowest common level, although there remains the important psychological affirmation provided by recognition as a refugee.⁵³

Alison next touched on some of the problems associated with the National Authority Support System (NASS) – the main source of financial support for asylum seekers and those who have applied for article 3 ECHR leave to remain. Issues around poverty, dispersal and addressing domestic violence and the particular impact on women were noted. In relation to domestic violence, Alison highlighted the NASS ‘Policy Bulletin’ on domestic violence published in January 2004;⁵⁴ and similar to the Home Office Gender Guidelines, the bulletin is surprisingly good in theory. Further, whilst Alison said in her experiences dealing with NASS have been positive in relation to trafficked women at physical risk, she is aware that other advisers have experienced difficulty in relation to domestic violence.

The final issue that Alison touched on was legal aid and the significant problems women with immigration issues face in finding competent advice. Alison noted two reasons for this; firstly the cuts to the civil legal aid budget make it difficult for firms to do a decent job, resulting in the withdrawal of many of the best advisers from offering legal aid. Secondly, many advisers are not competent or aware of the issues particular to women. Alison did note that the relatively new compulsory accreditation scheme should help root out the least capable of the advisers (and the scheme’s syllabus inclusion of some awareness of vulnerable categories of applicant), but the net result is that there are advice deserts.

Alison concluded by saying there are positive developments to celebrate and it should be recognised that campaigners have obtained ‘refuge within the law’ for some women. However, there is still much to do, through campaigning, using the courts and other means, to ensure that women’s experiences are recognised and women are given the proper protection guaranteed under international law.

Poonam Joshi⁵⁵

Poonam’s presentation focused on whether civil and criminal law really provides refuge to BME women facing domestic violence, forced marriage, dowry related abuse and so called honour crimes. However, Poonam made two preliminary points.



Poonam Joshi addressing the conference.

Firstly, this Government, more than any other has moved away from the concept of violence against women as a gendered form of abuse that has joint root causes and commonalities in how the civil and criminal justice systems deal with the victims. It has divided up the manifestations of violence and made them gender neutral. Whilst rape crisis centres are closing down, this Government had

(53) Recognised refugees can also obtain a Refugee Convention travel document to facilitate travel abroad. This is not available to a person given Humanitarian Protection.

(54) Policy Bulletin 70 dated 23.1.04

(55) Poonam Joshi is Gender Adviser to Amnesty International UK. See further www.amnesty.org.uk

considered staffing its 24-hour domestic violence helpline with men as well as women. Poonam said that Ministers champion specific manifestations, such as FGM, trafficking and forced marriage, and believe they have done enough by creating new criminal offences, when these abuses were already criminalised. She added that the various Government consultations and working groups fracture the sector's energies and demands upon the Government to treat violence against women as a form of gender discrimination and calls to examine root causes and to place prevention at the heart of the Government response.

Secondly, when looking at how the law can protect women, Poonam said the wider context must be considered because the law alone cannot protect women. She noted that women need the right conditions to leave violence and access refuge and legal protection, namely social security benefits, refuges and other emergency accommodation, support and shelter for their children, understanding social workers, and support workers from within the voluntary sector who will act as their advocates. In addition, women need lawyers, police officers, prosecutors and judges literate in the dynamics and impact of domestic violence and all the other forms of violence on BME women. Legal professionals who understand that when a woman has uncertain immigration status, this makes her vulnerable rather than use this as an excuse to question her credibility. The legal professionals must also realise that BME women will also have to struggle with institutional racism and multiculturalism. Poonam stated that unless the Government is prepared to deliver joined up care to all women irrespective of their ethnicity or immigration status, the best laws in the world will not protect them.

Poonam went on to discuss criminal and civil law remedies separately and noted that individual women will often experience both. The civil law section of Poonam's presentation focused on identifying key obstacles to women obtaining civil protection. Before discussing injunctions, Poonam briefly touched upon other civil remedies that do not result in actual protection but could certainly result in justice, such as divorce.

She highlighted loopholes in the law that prevent BME women getting justice, and the lack of sensitivity of the law towards BME women from communities or faith groups where divorce leads to ostracisation and stigma. Abusive spouses can also easily make applications for divorce based on fabricated unreasonable behaviour grounds, and there is no legal aid for women wanting to defend such divorces or to help those women who find their abusive spouse still exercising power and control by contesting their petition for divorce. For those forced into marriage, annulment is available, but the evidential difficulties of proving duress make it almost impossible to pursue. For those women who qualify for financial relief, the vast majority will be unable to recover dowries, an issue which is often dismissed as unimportant by legal professionals, but which is a great source of frustration for many women, who feel the treatment marks a continuation of the abuse suffered.

Next, Poonam discussed civil law protections, and said that most women facing or fleeing violence will find refuge in the law, at least on paper. She noted the power of the court under the Family Law

Act Part IV 1996 to grant injunctions against most of the types of abuse perpetrated by most abusers including current and former spouses, cohabitants, fiancés and extended families members. Poonam also highlighted the use of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 where the relationship between the victim and abuser is not covered by the Family Law Act.

However, problems arise in accessing legal representation and enforcing protection. Reiterating Alison's point, Poonam said the Government changes to legal funding mean that many firms have stopped offering legal aid, or those who do restrict their practice to specific areas. Those firms that do still offer representation for injunctions, divorce and annulments are restricted in the amount of preparatory work they can undertake before a certificate of public funding can be obtained.

Poonam spoke about the 'crisis of representation' where women who do receive funding have problems finding a lawyer and in particular there are fewer specialist lawyers with the expertise on the full range of family law remedies that BME women may be entitled to seek. For those women that do not qualify for legal assistance, they often have to rely on the voluntary sector or represent themselves, with the vulnerability of having been subjected to violence as well as additional elements for BME women such as language issues. Poonam noted that an abused person challenging an abuser it is not an equal relationship, and undermines the international human rights norm of equality before the law. She argued that abuse victims should automatically have vulnerable witness status, acknowledging the gravity of repeated abuse and their vulnerability to continued intimidation.

Poonam went on to say that where women have obtained injunctions, enforcement poses an obstacle. In Poonam's experience, injunctions were often breached and little police action was taken to enforce them even where a power of arrest existed. She went on to discuss the case of another lawyer's client.

The client, a woman of Latin American origin, had obtained a non molestation order with a power of arrest attached. The day after she obtained the injunction, her ex partner punched her through a car window as she sat in her car. The woman had a witness to the breach. The lawyer called the police who refused to arrest the man. After a series of calls and sheer persistence, the lawyer spoke with a senior police officer persuading him that it was in the best interests of the police to arrest the man as he was sure to offend again.

However, Poonam questioned how many women would be fortunate enough to have such a committed lawyer to represent them. If they didn't have a lawyer, how many would have the time, confidence or skills to persist with seeking the arrest? This is further complicated for some women from BME communities who may be unlikely to even approach the police because of fears of racism, detention or removal due to an insecure immigration status or because of language issues. What is required is a change in police attitudes to enforcement; the problem is not with the policies, some of which are exemplary, or in training or guidance but in the attitudes of the rank and file police officers. Poonam noted that whilst there are many good and committed police officers, the reality is that

enforcement remains a lottery. There are high attrition rates for domestic violence offences; with an 11% conviction rate the lack of commitment to policing breaches of civil law is hardly surprising. This lack of commitment combined with institutional racism, results in multiple discrimination that is doubly entrenched. Poonam said that the solution to this problem lay in creating a deep and pervasive cultural shift within the police force which would ensure all women obtain equal protection; but how to do this is another problem. The provisions of the DV Act 2004 which will make breach of a non molestation order arrestable, will not make much difference until this cultural shift is brought about.

The second section of Poonam's presentation focused on criminal law, highlighting the gaps in both the text of the law and its implementation. Poonam noted that whilst domestic violence, forced marriage, dowry abuse or so called honour crimes are not specific crimes, there are a many offences under which prosecutions can be brought including common assault, threatening behaviour, actual bodily harm (ABH), grievous bodily harm (GBH), kidnapping, false imprisonment, abduction, various sexual offences and murder. Whilst there are loopholes in the law, Poonam questioned whether a crime of forced marriage really would capture those perpetrators that committed criminal acts pursuant to the forced marriage outside of the UK.

Relaying her discussions with caseworkers, Poonam said the majority of survivors of forced marriage or honour related crimes do not want to pursue criminal prosecution either because they do not want to see their families prosecuted despite what they have done or out of fear of coming into further contact with them. However, for those BME women who actively seek prosecution (rather than police assistance to help them escape an abusive situation) their cases generally involve threats, assaults and sexual offences arising out of domestic violence. She reiterated the low conviction rates for domestic violence, noting that the rates for rape are even lower at just over 5%. Whilst Poonam acknowledged that part of this attrition was due to women withdrawing complaints, she said the police and CPS also make a significant contribution in their handling of the initial complaint, treatment of the complainant, evidence gathering and supporting the complainant through the investigation and prosecution. Poonam gave an example of police treatment from her experience of working with Southall Black Sisters in 2004.

A South Asian woman had been assaulted by her spouse; her neighbours heard the attack and called the police. The police found the woman outside her home, her clothes torn and with no shoes on; she did not speak English. She was taken to a police station where she was not seen by a doctor, no interpreter was called and she was not interviewed. A friend collected her a few hours later and took her to hospital where it was discovered that she had broken ribs. Her friend took pictures of the injuries and called the police a couple of days later to find out what action they were taking. The police said they would not be taking any action as the woman had not said she had been a victim of domestic violence, and now it was too late to proceed.

Poonam questioned how a clear cut case of Actual Bodily Harm, perhaps even Grievous Bodily Harm, could result in no action. Poonam said she could provide numerous examples of where BME women have been let down either by poor investigation, under-charging or during the prosecution where the police have not enforced breaches of bail conditions or the CPS have not taken them seriously. Many women are let down not because they are BME women but because domestic assaults and sexual offences are not being properly investigated and prosecuted. She also said there are examples of good policing where the police have given considerable support but BME women have been let down by their families and communities who force them to withdraw their complaint, or by immigration and asylum laws which deny access to refuges and effectively forced them to live with their abuser. There is one particular success story where a women's abusive spouse was convicted of assault, leading to the throwing out of his cross petition of divorce, and enabling the woman, with good police support, to successfully use the domestic violence concession.

However, Poonam said the conference delegates know through experience that sometimes BME women can receive lesser protection because of their ethnicity or faith or immigration status. The current climate of negativity around immigration, asylum and race and the implications of the policing of visible minorities as part of the war on terror renders the relationship between BME women and criminal law agencies difficult and complex making it harder for BME women to obtain protection. Ultimately, Poonam said that the same arguments for civil law apply to criminal law; the strength of the protection lies in the implementation, and the text of the law accords greater protection than in reality.

Poonam concluded by stating that the quality of refuge that BME women receive under civil and criminal law will remain wanting until the Government and law enforcement agencies improve their delivery on all forms of violence against women. Concurrently, they must also address the discrimination that BME women face due to hidden and overt racism, multicultural practices and discriminatory access to refuges and justice because of their immigration status.

Questions from the floor

Kalwinder Sandhu, Coventry Panahghar,⁵⁶ spoke about poverty and domestic violence, and the need to ensure that women subjected to abuse retain their jobs. It is therefore important to engage with the corporate world by highlighting the ethical and social responsibility of business and industry to tackle domestic violence and retain workers, which is also in the business



Conference delegates during presentations.

(56) Panahghar is an Asian Women's Refuge Service, for further information please see: www.safehouse.org.uk

interest. Kulvinder said this issue is not often raised and asked what work is being done in this area.



Ranjit Kaur (centre), Poonam Joshi (right) and Alison Stanley (left) during the question and answer session.

Poonam Joshi said that several trade unions are developing domestic violence policies, which include provisions to support women who have been absent from work (due to the abuse) to return to their jobs. She also spoke about the End Violence against Women Coalition,⁵⁷ which includes Amnesty International and the TUC. Poonam said that the Coalition was also looking to further involve employers and noted that the TUC is planning a best practice conference for November 2006 on addressing violence against women, broadening the scope beyond domestic violence, with a view to producing a best practice guide in 2007. Poonam also noted the formation of the Corporate Alliance in 2005, which Baroness Scotland had previously spoken about. A key issue for domestic violence policies in the workplace is how to make implementation mandatory rather than discretionary. Whilst she acknowledged that the Government is often accused of being a “nanny state”, they must take the lead in this area.

Rights of Women 30th Anniversary Keynote Address: Doreen Lawrence⁵⁸

Doreen Lawrence approached the topic of violence and the law from a woman’s perspective, discussing some of her contributions to the issued. Doreen noted that women need to have the resources available to them to enable them to make informed decisions; this, she said, is very difficult and one of the main obstacles women face is not having the right resources at their disposal during times of crisis. She said Rights of Women fill this gap by providing free legal advice and support.

As the Rights of Women Annual Report has highlighted the need for access to advice has increased, demonstrated by the number of women that have tried unsuccessfully to contact the Rights of Women helpline. Doreen said that Rights of Women provides practical advice using a rights-based strategy to assist women identify their problems and seek appropriate outcomes. The concept of justice for all is supposedly integral to and forms the basis of the legal system; however, Doreen noted that injustice has long been, and continues to be, a problem for women. Thus there is a need to campaign both within and outside the justice system. Doreen said that Rights of Women is beginning to address this need, although there is a long way to go until the needs of women are fully met.



Doreen Lawrence providing the Rights of Women 30th Anniversary Keynote Address.

(57) The Coalition was launched on 23rd November 2005. For further information please see: www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk

(58) Doreen Lawrence is the Director of the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, and was awarded the OBE for services to community relations in 2003, almost ten years after the murder of her son Stephen Lawrence. See further www.stephenlawrence.org.uk

Doreen said it is important to have women's organisations that are managed by women for women; and noted that the delegates, as women, know how crucial it is to have people to trust during a stressful and difficult time. Drawing on her experience of working at the Monitoring Group⁵⁹ supporting women subjected to domestic violence, Doreen said that fear and confusion is magnified at times of vulnerability and women need to know where to go and where to get the best advice. Doreen said she believes that the police are now taking domestic violence a little more seriously, although she was aware that many would disagree with this. She said that when she was working at the Monitoring Group, she did not know about Rights of Women but wishes she had, as she could have looked to them to help the women she was supporting. The Stephen Lawrence Trust also receives calls from mothers seeking legal advice for themselves and their children, and Doreen said it was good to know that they can be signposted to Rights of Women.

Earlier in the day, Doreen had attended the Woman of Year 2005 lunch,⁶⁰ which confirmed for her, the importance of celebrating women's achievements. The previous week she also attended the European Federation of Black Women Business Owners,⁶¹ along with Black women from across the world who spoke about their achievements against the odds. Doreen said that women everywhere are achieving great things and are making a difference to other women. She spoke in particular about the Vice President of the Bahamas who had not let mountainous obstacles stand in her way. Doreen noted that in our troubling lives it is enlightening to see and hear about others doing well; uplifting and inspiring stories can help motivate us. Doreen said that that the same can be said of Rights of Women's Director Ranjit Kaur, who is leading the way forward in terms of key issues that affect women.

Doreen noted that over the last thirty years Rights of Women has grown from strength to strength in its ability to support women. Doreen spoke about Rights of Women's recent work on sexual violence, including the establishment of a dedicated legal advice line⁶² and the publication of *From Report to Court*, a handbook for survivors outlining the procedures and processes involved in reporting and prosecuting sexual violence.⁶³

Doreen said that women's achievements are worth recognising because they help to empower others. She also highlighted the difficulty faced by women from all walks of life to reach the top of their profession, and the difficulty of struggling for their rights and obtaining legal support is an added pressure that can be done without. Doreen went on to highlight the achievements of Gloria Mills, CBE, the first Black woman president of the TUC, appointed in September 2005. Doreen also spoke about the contributions of the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust to the advancement of women, noting that in the last four years, the Trust has supported twelve young women (of 30 awardees) with educational bursaries; in the 2005-6 academic year, four of seven supported students are women.

(59) For further information please see www.monitoring-group.co.uk

(60) For further information please see www.woyla.co.uk

(61) For further information please see www.efwbo.net

(62) Rights of Women runs a sexual violence legal advice line on 020 7251 8887 (open Monday 11-1pm and Tuesday 10-12pm), and a general legal advice line on 020 7251 6577 (open Tuesday–Thursday 2–4pm and Friday 12–2pm).

(63) For a free downloadable copy please see www.rightsofwomen.org.uk or contact Rights of Women directly for a hardcopy.

Next, Doreen spoke about her experiences dealing with the murder of her son, Stephen Lawrence. Stephen's death changed Doreen's ordinary life beyond all recognition, sending her into a downward spiral of distrust of authority and those who were meant to protect her and her family. She said every day was a battle with the police; she felt she was at war, without the protection of body armour to shield her from the anguish she encountered from the criminal justice system. Doreen said the decision to continue with her study was a difficult one to reach, but she needed the distraction. At the time, there was a delay in releasing Stephen's body because the five white male perpetrators each had the individual right to have their own post mortem conducted. Doreen said that being part of such an incident you are not aware of the progression of time; consequently, she only recognises times and dates by the events that took place after Stephen's death. The first ten years after Stephen's murder are marked by a succession of events, from the first adjournment of first inquest in 1993 and the Barker Review, the second investigation in 1994, the private prosecution in 1996, and in 1998 the start of the Public Inquiry that concluded with a report in 1999. Doreen said that whilst she has described these events in simple terms, they were not; they were gruelling years.

The inquiry brought out issues that Doreen was not aware of such as the incompetence of the first investigation, or the links between certain police officers and the perpetrators. She said that for the first time it was reported that middle England was shocked at the racism of not only individual police officers but the institutional racism that existed in Britain. There was no hiding place for those officers who investigated Stephen's murder, and because of their racist behaviour and clear incompetence, Stephen's killers are free.

Doreen said her confidence took a bad knock and she had no idea what to do; she kept questioning herself as to what she'd done wrong. She said it takes a long time to recover, and in some respects she does not think she is there yet, but she is working on her faith. She said she that was sometime able to understand that takes time for changes to happen; but said this sacrifice can be a hard pill to swallow. Doreen spoke of her strong sense of justice and truth, which she uses in her everyday life. She said that without such guiding principles, we have very little.

Doreen spoke about her unexpected and new interaction with the police, and how she had no reason to think that that they were not being truthful; she said she may be naïve but she thought the law was supposed to protect and to challenge those that set out to harm her and her children. The family had to think on their feet, and decisions had to be made. There was no time to digest information, compounded by the failure of the police to follow up on information. Doreen said that sometimes it feels like a lifetime ago, and other times it only seems like yesterday. She said that life tends to throw obstacles in our way to derail us from our objectives. But Doreen said that we must hold firm, think positively, with determination that we will succeed.

Doreen then recited the poem 'Phenomenal Women', by Dr. Maya Angelou, whom Doreen called a woman of wisdom and insight.

Pretty women wonder where
my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a
fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.
I say,
It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.

I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Men themselves have
wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them
They say they still can't see.
I say,
It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.

I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
The palm of my hand,
The need of my care,
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Copyright Dr Maya Angelou, reproduced with kind permission of Dr Angelou's office.

Doreen said that as women we need to be proud of ourselves. Having listened to Poonam and Alison, there are often difficulties which lead us to question how we continue; but we continue because of the inner strength that we all possess. At the lunch Doreen had attended earlier that day, she met a woman who was abused as a child; the abuse was filmed and posted on the internet. However, this woman found the strength, with a reporter, to go undercover to trap her abusers, and was able to catch many paedophiles who were imprisoned for life. This woman felt very uncomfortable in crowds; however she stayed at the lunch, in a room of 500 women and this, Doreen said, was a sign of inner strength and she was very proud of the woman. Doreen noted that whilst she has not suffered domestic abuse, the abuse she has suffered is the loss of her son, a continuing abuse because Stephen's killers are still walking the streets and there is nothing that she can do about it. She noted that this resonates with many women who are suffering, who feel that there is nothing they can do; but with the help of Rights of Women this is being addressed, and women can take courage and know that there is an organisation out there to support them. Doreen said she has found support from many, including people she doesn't know who have told her she is in their prayers. The ability to draw on the strength of others is very important, and without the people around her, Doreen said she is not certain that she would have been able to attend the conference. She finished by saying that we are women, and phenomenal women, and we should take heart from this.

Ranjit Kaur

Ranjit thanked Doreen for her address, describing Doreen as a phenomenal woman. Ranjit said Doreen's experiences and her ability to share them with the conference is a testimonial to Doreen's courage and the inspiration she provides to others. Ranjit also noted Doreen's busy schedule, but

said her attendance at the conference was an indication of the importance of violence against women and the work of Rights of Women.

Ranjit thanked Doreen for her kind comments about Rights of Women; however it was also important to recognise that Rights of Women is one organisation, which does not exist in isolation, but rather draws support from the organisations represented by conference delegates. Rights of Women offers legal advice, it does not pick up the pieces or provide counselling or emotional support, or provide housing; these are things the delegates do and Ranjit saluted them for their work. Ranjit reiterated her appreciation for the assistance and support the delegates and their organisations provide to Rights of Women.

Ranjit then gave a round of the key messages for Government that emerged from the conference. Firstly, the positive measures this government has put in place should be recognised. This Government introduced the DV Act in 2004, and while there are problems with certain provisions, there are also those which should be commended. The Government's introduction of the Human Rights Act 1998 was also a positive. Ranjit noted that whilst certain shared values are not always brought to fruition, this is a Government that has committed itself, in many degrees, to the kind of issues that the women's sector want them to.

However, whilst Ranjit praised the Government for these actions, equally she also pointed out that the sector has expectations of this Government. Certainly, one expectation is that the introduction of the Human Rights Act should not be followed by abusing the rights contained therein in the name of combating terrorism. Ranjit said the Government also talks about supporting the women's sector and women-only services and she challenged them to prove their commitment and to not legislate in a way that prohibits or restricts the sector's work. The Government should not try and mainstream the women's sector out of existence and they should not only fund mainstream organisations and then wonder what happened to the women's sector. Ranjit said that if the Government wants to work with the women's sector they should not only talk to organisations, but should also support the initiatives and understand the reasons why women's organisations exist.

Referring to the question earlier in the day to Baroness Scotland on the "shoot to kill" policy, Ranjit noted it was left to individuals and organisations at the conference to ask these kinds of questions of Government; Government



Delegates at the close of the conference.

that is not asked questions, is Government to be afraid of, and Government that does not welcome such questions, is Government to be afraid of.

Finally, Ranjit said that there are numerous causes in the women's sector, and referring to the example of 'honour crimes' she cautioned against the legitimisation of the term, as has occurred with domestic violence. Ranjit urged recognition that forced marriage, 'honour crimes', rape, and sexual abuse are all part of the same phenomena – violence against women. Violence against women is borne out of misogyny; it is the behaviour of men that needs to change. Blame should not be placed on women for dressing provocatively, nor should women have to put up with situations that cause them to suffer. She said responsibility for tackling violence against women also lies with the men in our communities, and this needs to be accepted by Government, the law makers and enforcers, including the Police. Ranjit said there is a need for the women's sector to revisit violence against women, to look at the kind of campaign that Poonam spoke about. In particular, she spoke about the possibility of enacting a Violence against Women Act, which would encompass all these manifestations and address the division of the sector.

Ranjit extended her thanks to all the speakers who generously contributed their time to the conference and ensured its success. She thanked all the workshop facilitators, and the staff at Rights of Women, Emma, Nadine, Hannah, Kate, Gita and Malinda – the conference would not have been possible without their work. Ranjit extended a particular thank you, on behalf of herself and the Rights of Women Management Committee, to Kathy Francis, Rights of Women Training Officer, who was very involved in the organisation of the event. Ranjit also expressed her appreciation to members of the Management Committee who had participated in the conference.

Ranjit thanked the Lilith Project who, during the conference, presented Rights of Women with the Rising Stars Award (Best Voluntary Sector Violence against Women Project) for 2005. Finally, Ranjit thanked delegates for their attendance and contributions.



Rights of Women Staff and Management Committee members receiving the 2005 Lilith Project Rising Star Award.

Annex I: Speakers and Workshop Facilitators Biographies

Speakers

Poonam Joshi, Gender Policy Advisor, Amnesty International UK

Poonam Joshi has campaigned on issues of race/ gender and discrimination for over thirteen years. She practised as a family and criminal solicitor with Winstanley Burgess Solicitors for several years and since July 2004 has been the gender policy advisor at Amnesty International UK. Poonam has also been a member of Southall Black Sisters since 1997 and has been involved in their research; lobbying and campaign work on immigration, benefits and domestic violence.

Ranjit Kaur, Director, Rights of Women

Ranjit Kaur has been the Director of Rights of Women since February 2000. Prior to joining Rights of Women, Ranjit was Unison's Regional Women's Officer in the South East Region, and before that spent fifteen years in the civil service. In 1993, she was awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Public and Commercial Services Union in recognition of her contribution to furthering equality issues, becoming the first Black woman to be honoured in this way in the Union's History. In 1999, she completed a law degree at Birkbeck College, University of London.

Marai Larasi, Executive Director, nia project (formerly Hackney Women's Aid)

Marai Larasi has worked in Women's Aid for over 10 years. She is an unapologetic feminist who describes her work at the nia project as 'definitely not just a job' and feels privileged to be able to 'work her politics'. She is passionate about combating violence against women and inequality generally and sees education and awareness-raising as key instruments of change in her work. In addition to her daily management of the organisation, Marai is involved with a range of committees, steering / working groups and forums.

Doreen Lawrence, Director, Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust

Doreen Lawrence is the Director of the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust and was awarded the OBE for services to community relations in 2003, almost 10 years after the murder of her son Stephen. Doreen and her family fought a long and arduous campaign to get justice for Stephen and to expose the failings of the Metropolitan Police in investigating his murder. The campaign culminated in the MacPherson inquiry into Stephen's death which fundamentally changed the nature of race relations in Britain forever, resulting in the Race Relations Act Amendment 2000. Doreen through her work in the Stephen Lawrence Trust, launched in 1998, has worked tirelessly to achieve the Trust's vision of tackling under-achievement and empowering Black and minority ethnic young people through education. She was recently named in a survey as one of 100 greatest Black Britons and 8th most influential woman in the UK.

Yvonne Rhoden, Diversity Directorate, Metropolitan Police

Yvonne Rhoden has served with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) for the past 20 years, and has been a detective for ten years. She has been specifically engaged in the area of domestic violence,

focusing on issues that affect BME women and children. Yvonne has a central role in dealing with honour crimes and killings and is a member of both the National and MPS Forced Marriage Working Group. She is part of the strategic team with responsibility for managing the 32 Community Safety Units in London, developing the MPS response to domestic violence and hate crime.

The Rt Hon Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC

The Rt Hon Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC is the Home Office Minister of State for the Criminal Justice System and Offender Management and is spokesperson for the Department of Trade and Industry on Women and Equality Issues in the House of Lords. Previously, she was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Lord Chancellor's Department (2001-2003) and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (1999-2001). After graduating with LLB Hons (London), Patricia Scotland was called to the Bar (Middle Temple) in 1977, received her silk in 1991 and became a Bencher in 1997. Baroness Scotland was created a peer in 1997 and was raised to the Privy Council in July 2001. At the Home Office, Baroness Scotland oversees the National Offender Management Service, youth justice, Home Office input into government policy on young people, sentencing policy, and domestic violence.

Alison Stanley, Solicitor, Bindman & Partners

Alison Stanley is a solicitor and partner in London civil liberties firm Bindman and Partners. She qualified as a solicitor in 1984 and has worked in the immigration field both in the not for profit and private sectors. For 4 _ years she worked as the first solicitor for the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. She has lectured and trained extensively on immigration law. She is a founder member of the Refugee Women's Legal Group and the Law Society's Immigration Committee (of which she currently the chair). She has a keen interest in legal aid has been a peer reviewer in immigration for the Legal Services Commission. She acts regularly for children and for social services, including regularly giving expert opinions in care proceedings.

Carol Valentine, Chair, Rights of Women

Carol Valentine is the current Chair of Rights of Women and has been a member for the past five years. Carol is a manager at Kent County Council and has a background working in regeneration and economic development. She also has extensive experience working in the diversity and equality field. Carol is active in the public sector union, Unison, and has been involved in a number of their committees including the Women's and Black Members' groups. She is also a tutor in trade union studies.

Workshop Facilitators

Emma Scott, Senior Legal Officer, Rights of Women

Emma Scott is Senior Legal Officer at Rights of Women with responsibility for delivering the advice line services. She is also involved in developing and delivering training courses on areas of law affecting women and contributing to the organisation's publications. Prior to working at Rights of Women, Emma was a solicitor in private practice for nine years, specialising in family law with

particular focus on divorce, separation and disputes involving children. She also has experience of criminal and mental health law. She has a particular interest in domestic violence and has previously been an active member of both the Hackney and Barking & Dagenham Domestic Violence Foras. She is Chair of the Board of Trustees of the nia project (formerly Hackney Women's Aid).

Nadine Sime, Legal Officer Rights of Women

Nadine Sime is a Legal Officer at Rights of Women, advising callers to the dedicated Sexual Violence Legal Advice Line on the law and procedures in relation to sexual violence and the criminal law system. She delivers training courses on the law and sexual violence, and writes publications on this area of law. Coming from a litigation background she previously worked as a solicitor in private practice specialising in both criminal and civil litigation

Debora Singer, Coordinator, Refugee Women's Resource Project (RWRP) and Clare Palmer, Researcher, RWRP

The Refugee Women's Resource Project was set up in 2000 at Asylum Aid, a registered charity which provides free legal representation and advice to asylum seekers and refugees. The project aims to enable women fleeing serious human rights violations to gain protection in the UK. The research and collection of country of origin information relevant to women not only assists individual women with their claims for protection against persecution, but is also used to raise awareness and influence officials and policy-makers to take women's needs into account. The training and information we provide also enables other advisers to assist women more effectively. This is the first project of its kind to specifically address all these issues.

Tivoli Wallington, Crown Prosecution Service

Tivoli Wallington joined the CPS Policy Directorate in 2004, where she holds the national lead for domestic violence. In this post she has updated the policy on prosecuting cases of domestic violence and written guidance for CPS staff on the implementation of this police. She is currently working on producing guidance on the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 and is part of a CPS national implementation team delivering training to all CPS staff on domestic violence issues. Tivoli is a solicitor, who began prosecuting in 1985 before the advent of the CPS. Prior to joining the Policy Directorate had been a CPS Team Leader in Bristol with local responsibility for domestic violence DV cases.

Arvinder Lall, Community Outreach Worker, Ashiana Project

Arvinder Lall is a Community Outreach Worker at Ashiana Project, where she trains professionals and facilitates workshops and discussions for young people on issues such as forced marriage, domestic violence, cultural and religious awareness, sexual health, and discrimination. She also provides day-to-day advice and support for women experiencing domestic violence. Arvinder holds a BA in Education and Maths and is IPD accredited in training and development.

Annex II: Conference Agenda

9.00 am	Registration
9.30 am	Introductions
9.45 am	Keynote Speaker: The Right Honourable Baroness Scotland of Ashthal, QC
Morning Session:	Violence against Women: Rhetoric or Remedies
10.10 am	Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marai (nia project)• Yvonne Rhoden (Metropolitan Police Service)
10.50 am	Question and Answer Session
11.00 am	Break
11.15 am	Workshops <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Domestic Violence: Is the Long Arm of the Law Enough?2. Rape, the Law, Process and Reality3. Break the Silence, Stop the Violence4. Forced Marriage and Honour Crimes5. Women Seeking Asylum, Women Seeking Protection from Violence
12.15 pm	Plenary
12.30 pm	Lunch
1.30 pm	Workshops (as above)
2.30 pm	Workshop Reports
3.15 pm	Break
Afternoon Session:	Violence against Women: Is there Refuge within the Law?
3.30 pm	Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poonam Joshi (Amnesty International, UK)• Alison Stanley (Bindman and Partners Solicitors)
4.00 pm	Question and Answer Session
4.15 pm	Right's of Women 30th Anniversary Keynote Address: Doreen Lawrence
4.30 pm	Close of Conference: Ranjit Kaur (Director of Rights of Women)

Annex III: List of Conference Delegates

Name	Organisation
Adebola Jay-Alechenu	Standing Together Against DV
Aisha Gill	Imkaan
Amanda Rodell	Milton Keynes Women's Aid
Amy Corrigan	East Berkshire Women's Aid
Ana Frechoso	Latin American Women's Aid
Angela Clarke	Knowsley Domestic Violence Support Services
Angela Passan (Singh)	Leeds Inter Agency Project
Angela Rivera	ISO-SAC
Angela Summerill	Equal Opportunities Commission
Anita Ediale	Toynbee Housing Association
Anjula Joshi	Rights of Women Volunteer
Ann Brewer	Unison – North Tees & Hartlepool
Anna Solwith	The Hub
Anne Shomefun	SOVA Women into Work (SOVA – Supporting Others through Volunteer Action)
Annette Crawford	Plymouth Women's Aid
Bear Montique	Advance
Bernadette McIlroy	Watford Women's Centre
Beverley Edwards	Refuge
Carol Valentine	MC – Kent County Council
Caroline Mills	Rights of Women Volunteer
Cath Elliott	Norfolk County Unison
Cath Linford	Unison – North Tees & Hartlepool
Catherine Unwin	Victim Support Lewisham
Catherine Whitehouse	Eaves Housing for Women
Cavelle Lynch	OSABA Women's Centre
Celestine Laporte	Unison
Charlotte Collins	Victim Support Redbridge
Chris Piggot	Portsmouth Area Refugee Support
Claire Goodman	Jewish Women's Aid
Clare Palmer	Asylum Aid Ltd
Clare Quinn	Next Link – Domestic Abuse Services
Clare Sommerville	Behind Closed Doors
Cleo Matthews	Unison – Social Services
Dawn Harding	Next Link – Domestic Abuse Services
Deborah Lawrence	Rape & Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre
Deborah Mills	Women's Support Network
Dianne Godden	Lliw Valley Women's Aid
Dilys Davy	Women's Support Network
Dina Rawal	Rights of Women Volunteer
Elaheh Rambarzini	Refugee Council
Elaine Parry	Avenues Women Ltd
Elizabeth Walker	Rights of Women Management Committee
Fathieh Yazli	Refugee Council
Fawzia Khanum	Luton Women's Aid
Graziella Falciglia	DV Hate Crime Team – London Borough of Hackney
Hannah White	Womankind Worldwide
Heather Vallianna	Eaves Housing for Women
Helen Avison	Calderdale Women's Centre
Helen Bidmead	Metropolitan Police Service
Helen Foshier	Metropolitan Police Service
Isabel Eden	Eaves Housing for Women
Jacqueline Springer	London Probation Service
Jan Buss	nia project
Jennifer Mayling	Hammersmith Women's Aid
Jennifer Moate	Rights of Women Management Committee
Jill Richards	Monmouthshire Women's Aid
Joanna Pitson	Next Link – Domestic Abuse Services
Joanna White	Island Women's Refuge
Joanne Conaghan	Law School, University of Kent
Joyce Crump	Sutton Women's Centre
Julie Geddes	Milton Keynes Women's Aid

Kalwinder Sandhu	Panahghar Women's Refuge
Katie Hoare	East Berkshire Women's Aid
Katrina Morton	MOVE UK
Kay Patel	Newham Asian Women's Project
Lilian Bold	North Sussex Women's Aid
Lilly Segerman	Legal Services Commission
Linda Durrant	Unison
Louise Tyne	Behind Closed Doors
Maire Hughes	TUC
Margaret Njuguna	Church Army – Marylebone Project
Maria Irurita	Latin American Women's Rights
Marial Amalia Walker	Rights of Women Volunteer
Marie Earle	Manchester City Council
Marilyn Defreitas	Islington Women's Aid
Martha Walsh	Barrister
Martine Cockburn	Plymouth Women's Aid
Maurren Chigboh-Anyadi	Rights of Women Volunteer
Maurren O'Hara	Rights of Women Management Committee
Maxine Ceesay	Sahara Asians Women's Project
Mehreen Mallal	Newham Asian Women's Project
Michele Stokes	Haringey Women's Forum
Michelle Nicholls	Luton Women's Aid
Michelle Springer-Benjamin	Women and Girls Network
Mohini Howard	Birmingham Race Action Partnership
Narinder Panesar	Calderdale Women's Centre
Nicola Haigh	Knowsley Domestic Violence Support Services
Nicola Rodgers	Ministry of Defence
Omolade Akinwumi	Wandsworth African Caribbean Association
Penny Parrott	Osaba Women's Centre (Coventry)
Raggi Kotak	Barrister (London)
Rahnik Binjie	ROSHNI (Glasgow)
Raj Langi	Sandwell Women's Aid
Rebecca Flint	Eaves Housing for Women (London)
Rebkah Wilson	Rights of Women Management Committee (London)
Rubia Bhola	Asra Housing Association (London)
Ruth Blackburn	Victim Support's Witness Service
Ruth Chigwada-Bailey	Criminology in the Millennium (London)
Sakhile Ndhlovu	Women with a vision
Sam Evans	Home Office (VCU – Violent Crime Unit or Victim and Confidence Unit)
Sarah Boucher	Stafford Women's Aid
Sarah Ward	Sandwell Women's Aid
Sarbjit Ganger	Asian Women's Resource Centre
Senait Ross	Migrant Refugee Communities Forum
Sevil Serbes	IMECE (Turkish Speaking Women's Group) (London)
Sharon Greene	Unison
Sharon Tucker	The Women's Centre Sutton Ltd
Shelia Morris	London Borough of Southwark Social Services
Sophie Verhgen	Photographer
Sue Chapman	Peterborough City Council
Sue Marchant	Unison – North Tees & Hartlepool
Sultana Hussain	London Borough of Newham Domestic Violent Team
Susan Clydesdale-Cotter	Hammersmith Women's Aid
Susan Prescott	Avenues Women Ltd (Newcastle)
Susan Stevens	London Probation Service
Susana Klien	Latin American Women's Rights Service
Suzanne Flynn	Knowsley Domestic Violence Support Services
Tafia Byfield	Ealing Women's Aid
Taranjit Chana	Rights of Women Member
Tina Johnson	Knowsley Domestic Violence Support Services
Tonia Williams	Unison
Tracey Cooper	Island Women's Refuge
Vivienne Hayes	Women Resource Centre
Yasmin Rehman	Metropolitan Police Service TP Crime Directorate
Zoe Jackson	Early Intervention Project

Feedback from delegates...

“Keeping attending, keep learning, keep sharing, keep listening – never give up!!!”

“Excellent speakers of a calibre hard to match, wonderful networking opportunity.”

“Organisation and literature excellent. Every effort had been made to meet the needs of each delegate.”

“The whole event was very informative and offered an atmosphere where it was easy to network with women from other organisations.”

“This conference was outstanding. It met its aims and objectives. It was very well presented, in clear and concise terms.”

“Interesting, instructive, inspiring.”

“Excellently put together issues very topical cuts across every funding stream.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed the day and found it an excellent opportunity to network with people working in a number of fields.”

“A very impressive conference – well done!!”

“Thought provoking and inspiring.”